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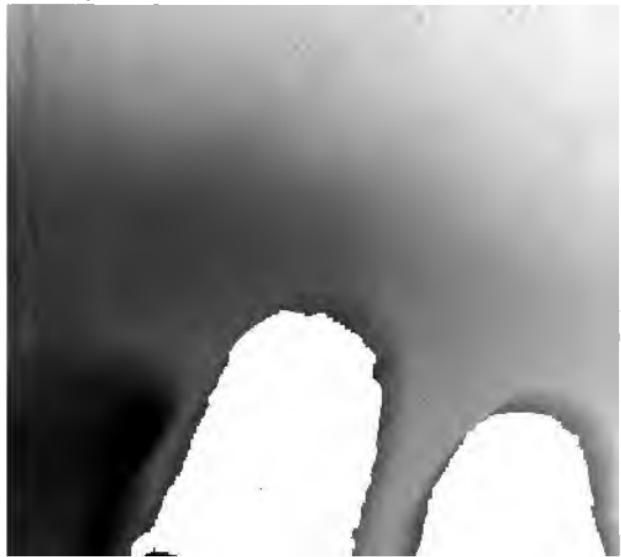


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## A PRELIMINARY FLOURISH.

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THE chief (and perhaps the only) advantage of a preface is that an author can talk therein pretty much as he pleases, as there is no one to hear him. Should prefaces ever be read, then they will lose their delightful charm of seclusion, and become so much like the rest of the volume as to be either dropped altogether or incorporated with the body of the work.

Imagining myself, therefore, alone at the back of the house, I proceed to express in perfect freedom the belief that whatever may be the literary merit of this, my third volume of sketches, it is a deal better than the second, as that was also a deal better than the first. I said as much of the second book when it was published, and the public confirmed the verdict in a most gratifying manner.

I would bespeak for Mrs. Cobleigh the mantle of charity, if I was sure of being heard, or of her willingness to don so unfashionable a garment. An excellent woman at heart is Mrs. Cobleigh, although she may perhaps be too closely confined to her sphere. Possibly *this fault is so rare as to be almost a virtue.*

I cannot forbear to utter a word of advice, although abundantly aware nobody will hear it. There is no plot to this book, and consequently there is no earthly need of hastening through its pages to see how things are going to turn out. Take plenty of time to read it. Go through it leisurely, and get the full benefit of the moral. But don't attempt to take in the whole of it at once ; don't dash headlong at it. It is not a free lunch.

Having thus eased my mind, I now put on my coat and go around to the front to show you in.

Yours sincerely,

THE AUTHOR.

## MRS. COBLEIGH'S BOOM.

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### I.

#### THE COMING UPRISING.

THERE was an active desire for reform in Danbury at this time. The entire community ran rife with it. It is a little remarkable, come to look back to the period, that there was sufficient partisan material in all Danbury to keep either of the two great political parties in an organized condition. But that there was a great deal more than enough for the purpose, was evident from the violent throes the community passed through in the effort then made to shake off party yoke. The party in power had a ring established. The party out of power had a ring to establish. These facts were formidable enough to alarm a less balanced borough than that of Danbury, and to array the best of all citizenship in opposition thereto.

First, there was a low murmur of dissatisfaction, and then followed open expressions of indignation. These were carefully noted by the Hon. Mr. Guhll, who was a strong party man, and consequently a discerner of the times. The

Guhll was a member of the organization which we shall speak of as the "Outs," to distinguish them from the party then in power, who were the "Ins." He had served the party in the legislature as well as in minor positions of trust. He was a large man, with an impressive chest and a face of flabby frankness. He wore several rings, and a white vest when the season permitted. The rings he wore through all weathers. With the alertness of vision born of the years he had watched the political vane, he detected "the popular movement" the moment of its inception. He saw that the feeling, while it aimed more particularly against the Ins, threatened the entire political machine as well. He mingled with the masses as became a man of large heart and comprehensive views of the government's necessities. Politics had been his life, his hope, and his solace, and as such he knew the public pulse and the public needs as only a lifelong politician can know them.

The Hon. Mr. Guhll, making himself assured that the uprising was genuine and deep-seated, and not a superficial spasm, gave his full attention to it, and, naturally enough, gave his unqualified support to its objects. There was not a more enthusiastic reformer in all Danbury than was the Hon. Mr. Guhll. If there was, it must have been Mr. Cobleigh. But there was this difference between the two. Mr. Cobleigh lacked the experience that had made the Hon. Mr. Guhll almost perfect in the selection and application of the

proper remedies for the disease of the community politic.

Mr. Cobleigh worked in a large factory where a great many men were employed. He was a good workman, an inoffensive companion, a sympathizing friend, and an opponent of fraud. He was well liked in the factory. He was among the first to hear the mutterings of discontent, and although not a man of political interests, still concerned himself in the welfare of his borough. He heard the men all about him talking of the dreadful corruption in office, and of the equally dreadful corruption ready to be sprung upon the village should the other party get in, and Mr. Cobleigh felt that his devoted borough was in imminent danger of being swept from the face of the earth. He brooded over this matter considerably, and expressed himself in the factory freely. The result was that his fellow-workmen got to looking up to him as one who saw the danger, and was prepared to battle against it. In other words, Mr. Cobleigh became a sort of leader, and yet without any effort on his own part, and with no self-consciousness of the fact. Thus does the emergency gravitate to the remedy.

The Hon. Mr. Guhll was not long in finding Mr. Cobleigh. It was natural that the two should instinctively draw together. The Hon. Mr. Guhll must have had more instinct than Mr. Cobleigh possessed. That was apparent enough.

*It is useless to deny that Mr. Cobleigh was*

pleased with the attentions thus bestowed upon him. The Hon. Mr. Guhll was a man of wealth and position, and his friendship, even his society, were not to be ignored. His years of experience, to say nothing of his natural grasp of situations, eminently fitted him to deal with the problem that now confronted Danbury.

This was in April. The next election for borough officers was to take place the following month.

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## II.

### STARTING THE UPRISING.

IN *The News*, of April 20, appeared the following advertisement:—

#### RALLY FOR REFORM.

*In view of the unblushing effrontery of the party in power, of the unmitigated fraud practised in the administration of the borough affairs, whereby the honest tax-payer is robbed of his hard-earned subsistence, it is deemed necessary that there should be a spontaneous outburst of the people in behalf of an immediate and radical reform.*

*To this end a public meeting of all those interested in a pure and upright government is called at the Opera House, on next Saturday afternoon, at two o'clock, to devise means and measures to stay the tide of official corruption now threatening to engulf our fair village.*

*By order of*

COMMITTEE OF CITIZENS.

This call for the "spontaneous outburst of the people" of Danbury was drawn up by the Hon. Mr. Guhll. He had had experience in such matters, and could do it much better than could any other reformer, and so it naturally fell to his lot. It was submitted to the inspection of Mr. Cobleigh before being put in print, the honorable author suggesting that perhaps it could be improved in numerous aspects,—a suggestion that was received by Mr. Cobleigh with an inward thrill of horror, and caused him to color as high up as his hair would permit to be seen. With all haste he protested that the document was as perfect as if inspired, and so coincided his fellow-workmen engaged in reform, while they rejoiced that the cause so dear to them had so influential and able a help as the Hon. Mr. Guhll.

The honorable gentleman certainly showed no lack of enthusiasm. He took everything upon his own shoulders, and shirked no responsibility in the organization of the opposition to the party in power. And no less busy, fortunately, were others of long experience in political matters, and it was equally fortunate that they were of the same party as the Hon. Mr. Guhll, because of the advantage harmony brings. Of these, three were especially prominent, these being Mr. Gagg, Mr. D'Coy, and Mr. Stoohl, three gentlemen who were blessed with an abundance of leisure, if not of means. Mr. Gagg was a red-faced party, with *bristling side-whiskers, and bristling hair on the*

top of his head, and a nose that was as suggestive of bristling as a nose can be. Mr. D'Coy was the opposite of Mr. Gagg. There was nothing of a bristling cast to any of his features. He was a man of repose, with an unctuous air that was quite taking. To see Mr. D'Coy draw his left hand along his chin-whisker was worth going some distance, he did it with an air of such intense satisfaction. At the table or the bar this act showed conspicuously, and made everybody in sight envy Mr. D'Coy the enjoyment of his food and drink, while it encouraged them to eat and drink more, in the hope to reach the same degree of pleasure. Mr. Stoohl was a soft-spoken man, of so little appearance anyway as not to be noticeable, certainly not to be cared about, unless he was working in your interests, when he became in a certain degree attractive.

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### III.

#### MR. COBLEIGH BECOMES A STANDARD-BEARER.

IT was proposed to put a reform ticket in the field,—a ticket that would command the support of every lover of good government,—and it was further proposed to place the name of Mr. Cobleigh thereon as one of the Burgess. This proposition was made to Mr. Cobleigh by the Hon. Mr. Guhll, and was opposed by him with the liveliest

emotions of a threatened modesty. He blushed all over at the suggestion. The Hon. Mr. Guhll was determined, however, that his name should be used. He said it was a duty he owed to his fellow-citizens and the interests of reform. He went so far as to consult with some of the men in Mr. Cobleigh's factory, and they were, of course, heartily in favor of it. In fact they had already set their mind upon it, and would have strenuously insisted on the nomination, even if it had not been proposed by the Hon. Mr. Guhll.

So it was fortunate, indeed, that the honorable gentleman happened to hit on one for the ticket who was so popular with the honest sons of toil.

The result was that Mr. Cobleigh consented to be a standard-bearer, if the uprising of the masses in the Opera House should see fit to select him for that important position. There could be no reasonable doubt of this, and he began to consider himself in the important and pleasing light of a candidate. His gratification at this mark of favor could not be denied. It had not been sought, it had not even been expected. There had been times when way down in his heart he felt a desire to figure in the councils of his town. It was a hidden-away ambition, destined, he had firmly believed, to perish without fruition. But, now that something definite had taken shape, it rose up with a volume and force that took in his entire nature, and made his quiet past seem like a dreary and forbidden waste.

The more he pondered over it, the more elated he grew ; and from the moment he gave his consent to the use of his name he became a changed man. He felt that he could not continue at his work until this matter was settled for good. He was too full of expectation, of anticipations, of visions of dawning glory, to contain himself at the bench. He started immediately for home to tell his wife of the great crisis that had come into his life.

Mrs. Cobleigh was engaged in the semi-annual rejuvenation of the vine and fig-tree under which Mr. and Mrs. Cobleigh, and Master Cobleigh, aged eleven, reposed in peace. The insignia of the performance abounded on all sides, and plentifully greeted Mr. Cobleigh on entering the yard. The best set of furniture was piled on the front stoop, the most valuable articles being more easily seen ; the walk around the side was barred in one place by the ice-chest, and in another by a table ; a couple of carpets lay on the grass, and a bedstead and a barrel had to be moved before he could get across the back stoop, and into the kitchen.

Mr. Cobleigh moved these obstacles without noting what they were, so absorbed was he in the object of his mission home. Mr. Cobleigh had his dinner-pail in his hand, with the uneaten dinner inside of it, for the hour was too early for that meal, even if he felt an inclination to consume it, which he did not.

Mrs. Cobleigh heard her lord enter, and looking up saw the dinner-pail somewhat before she saw him, if that were possible. She cast a startled glance at the clock, and seeing it marked scarcely half past eleven, her face darkened.

"What on earth possessed you to come home to your dinner to-day for? You know I've got no time to bother with you!"

Mrs. Cobleigh uttered this depressing salutation in an elevated voice. As she stood looking at him there was nothing promising in her aspect, at least nothing to encourage the unfolding of any scheme that did not directly bear on a spring cleaning. Her dress skirt was pinned up, disclosing a draggled and dilapidated balmoral, a pair of dishevelled stockings, covered at the feet with a pair of his own rubbers. Her arms were bared to above the elbows, and were very red, so far as they could be seen, but whether from hot water, or the cold air, was not apparent. Her face was mottled with soot and dirt and disgust, and the hair that crowned it looked very much as if the wearer had been used, after the manner of a broom, to rid corners of cobwebs.

Mr. Cobleigh took in all of this unpromising picture at a glance, and there was the least perceptible lowering of the barometer of his hope, but only for an instant. Then the realization of the future opening before him flashed before his eyes, and in its light every shadow fled from sight. He said, —

"I ain't thought anything about dinner, and did n't know whether it was noon or midnight. I've got something to tell you, Matilda Cobleigh, that will take away your appetite for weeks to come, it will fill you so full of joy." Mr. Cobleigh's face shone as he uttered this.

"What tomfoolery are you up to *now?*" she demanded shortly.

"Tomfoolery, is it!" he retorted. "You will talk tomfoolery on the other side of your mouth when you hear what I've got to tell you."

"Let's have it, then, for I've got no time to waste, I can tell you," she encouragingly responded.

Mr. Cobleigh could n't help staring at her in some degree of amazement. He did not consider that she was as yet in total ignorance of the pending revolution in his life.

"Why on earth don't you speak?" she observed, in further encouragement, "or have you lost your wits?"

The first prompting that came to Mr. Cobleigh was to make a reply fully flavored with domestic seasoning, and under almost any other circumstances this would have been justifiable; but he understood in time to check himself how humiliated she would feel when she knew what he knew, and to save her this, as much as possible, he forbore to provoke her into further temper, and simply observed, influenced thereto by the presence of the woman helping,—

"If you will step into the other room for a moment, I will tell you something that will make you open your eyes."

As Mr. Cobleigh said this he passed into the next room, and Mrs. Cobleigh followed, wondering what could be the matter, and fearing that the whitewasher had sent word he could not come in the morning. In there, Mr. Cobleigh carefully closed the door, and then confronting his wife, impressively asked,—

"What do you think?"

"Think what?" she snapped.

Mr. Cobleigh winced a grain, but immediately recovered.

"What do you think of my being elected an officer — of — the — borough — of — Danbury?" Mr. Cobleigh's eyes glistened as he deliberately paced off the more impressive portion of this important information.

"What on earth are you talking about, Cobleigh, or don't you know?" she impatiently cried.

Mr. Cobleigh smiled. He saw how incredulous she was of so great an honor coming to him, and he could understand how great the shock would be to her when she finally was convinced of it. This made him smile. She said,—

"If you ain't got anything to do but to stand there grinning like an idiot, I'll find something for you!"

Mr. Cobleigh ceased at once to smile. He felt *humiliated by the comparison*, and it was only by

a powerful gulp that he succeeded in swallowing back the language that rose to his tongue. Then, by another effort, he forced himself to tell her what had happened, but warmed up into a pleasing fervor as he progressed. He told her of what was proposed by the outraged and indignant taxpayers of the village, of the determination to hurl from power the present incompetent and corrupt body of officials, of the call for the uprising of the masses, of the Hon. Mr. Guhll's proposal that he, her husband, should take a most important part and office in the uprising, and, finally, of his consent to carry a standard in the great fight.

During the recital of this glowing summary, Mrs. Cobleigh paid as strict attention as was consistent with her duties as a wife and a mother who did n't want to live in a hog-pen all her days. She spoke but twice. Once she expressed the belief that a pail of water on the kitchen stove was boiling over. She thought she could smell it. The other occasion was when, after a moment of intent observation, she had darted to a part of the base-board, got down and rubbed her finger over it, and returned with a sigh of relief. She then said, "I thought that woman had taken off the paint; if she had I would have taken off her head." When he got through she suddenly inquired,—

"What brought you home at this hour? Is the shop shut down?"

"Did n't I come to tell you this?" he gasped, almost livid in the face.

"Do you mean to say that you left your work when you had your dinner with you to come way home to tell me all that folderol about the gassing of a lot of bummers? A nice thing for you to go and do, ain't it, mixing yourself up with that rabble, and losing your work and your wits? If you have got so much time to throw away, you'd better be at home here helping me clean, instead of gallivanting all over creation with a lot of rum-suckers."

Having delivered herself of this comment, conclusion, and eulogium all combined, Mrs. Cobleigh dashed out to take care of the water on the kitchen stove, and to see that the woman did not use soap in cleaning the paint on the window-casings.

Mr. Cobleigh, being left alone, appeared to be making strenuous exertions to catch his breath, in which performance he was greatly aided by forcibly slapping his brow with first his right hand and then his left. Having in a measure restored himself by this exercise, he put on his hat, drawing it well down upon his ears and eyes, and strode moodily from the premises, giving his wife, in passing, a look that was calculated to chill her very heart's blood, although we have no evidence that it did.

## IV.

## MR. COBLEIGH PREPARES TO DO SOMETHING.

IN the three days that intervened between the publication of the call for the uprising of the masses and the uprising itself, Mr. Cobleigh had ample cause to believe that the road to political preferment was not entirely of roses, and a lamentable reflection was that the thorns were matured, not by enemies, but in his own household. Mr. Cobleigh was not prepared to charge that his wife was determined upon covering him with the ignominy of defeat, but it was evident to the most dispassionate mind that she was scarcely in harmony with his ambition, and that she took no interest whatever in the numerous but necessary details of the situation. Mr. Cobleigh noted this unfortunate disposition on the part of his wife with alternating emotions of despair and indignation, and gave expression to his feelings in remarks that were lacking neither in point nor force, however deficient they may have been in diction.

To the estimable but sadly misguided woman, clear window-glass was more to glory over than a clear official record, and a pound of good scouring

sand well laid on became of more value than a torch-light procession a mile in length. If she could only get the streak out of the whitewash on the wall of the back bedroom, they might have all the political honors in the world, and welcome to them.

When Mr. Cobleigh strode from his home, as has just been mentioned, he went straight to those whose active sympathies his starved soul yearned for. In their review of the situation, with converse upon topics pertaining thereto, he lost the sense of loneliness that had fallen upon him in his home.

Returning to his domicile late in the afternoon, he was struck with the idea that a speech in acknowledgment of his nomination, when made, was not only what was due to his fellow-citizens for their courtesy, but would be of great advantage to himself in informing them of the excellent ability which he knew slumbered in his breast, but of which they had had no evidence, and which they might not suspect had an existence. The more he dwelt upon this idea, the more favorable it appeared to him.

But he said nothing to his wife about it on reaching home. The bitter experience of a few hours before was still fresh in his memory, and he shrank from risking a repetition. On reaching the premises, he worked his way quietly into the house by the front door, and stole unobserved up stairs, where he expected (and succeeded) to find

a room not under the devastating touch of mop and brush.

The room was in a stage of disorder, the table and chairs being occupied with sundry ornaments and knick-knacks from other apartments, but he cleared a chair for himself, and sat down to think, pretty confident that he would be uninterrupted in the process of crystallizing his thoughts into an appropriate address.

In less than a half-hour he got the start pretty clearly laid out. With this done he went after paper and pencil. This material was kept in a drawer in a bureau that stood in their bedroom down stairs. Mr. Cobleigh slipped quietly to that room, and succeeded in reaching it without attracting the attention of his wife, who was undoubtedly laying in ambush for him, ready to spring out with some ignoble duty for him to perform.

Mr. Cobleigh no sooner got inside the apartment than he realized that the getting there was not the most difficult part of the mission. The bureau was intrenched back of barrels and boxes and baskets, and over all was a pile of bedding. He set to work with the utmost caution to remove the bedding, and to open a path to the bureau, and was succeeding admirably when his wife suddenly appeared.

"Where on earth have you been?" she sharply demanded. "Here's that stove to bring in, and a hundred other things to do, and you off, the Lord only knows where."

In addition to the sting of this ungracious speech was the shock of being discovered so inopportunistly, Mr. Cobleigh was almost furious.

"What did I know about your darned old stove?" cried the standard-bearer of the reform movement. "Do you suppose I have got nothing to think of but a stove, when the masses are in peril, you grovelling creature?"

"Who is to think of the stove, if you ain't, I want to know?" she answered. "Did you expect General Grant was to carry it in for you, while you were loafing around some grogery?"

"I don't care a darn who did it. I've got something of more importance to attend to than that, I guess."

"Let it alone, then," she spitefully answered. "I'm sure I don't want you to do anything. *I* can help the woman bring it in. *I* can lug my life out. *I* ain't fit for anything else."

"Where is the infernal thing?" he shouted, moving to the door:

"You need n't touch it. You need n't worry yourself," she soothingly continued. "*I* ain't fit for nothing else. *I* can do it."

Mr. Cobleigh was too exasperated to make any reply to this. He felt that in action alone could his feelings find adequate expression. He dashed into the yard, and caught hold of that stove as if it had been a murderer taken in the act, and it is safe to say no stove ever made better time for the distance than did that piece of furniture. The

woman who helped carry it had great difficulty to keep her feet, and was full fifteen minutes recovering her natural breathing and getting over her surprise.

"*There!*" he spitefully observed, as he set the article down. "I hope you are satisfied *now!*" And immediately left without waiting to hear if she was.

The pencil and paper were finally obtained, but the train of thought so rudely broken was not so easily recovered, and by the time the supper was ready, his mind was so muddled with the extraordinary efforts to recover his ideas that he could hardly distinguish his napkin from the salt-cellar.

He did think he would get his thoughts on paper after tea, and was preparing to convey himself undemonstratively to the room up stairs for that purpose, when Mrs. Cobleigh's query if he was going to leave the sitting-room carpet and ice-chest and other things out in the yard all night, brought him up with unpleasant suddenness.

"Great heavens!" cried the standard-bearer in the reform movement, "I might better let the country go to the dogs than to be tortured like this!"

"Tortured!" exclaimed Mrs. Cobleigh, indignantly. "A great pass things have come to that you can't be asked to do a single thing about the house but what you must talk of being tortured."

"I'd like to know what you would call it, to be

eternally shoving an old carpet and an ice-chest under a man's nose when he's got the interests of the public on his shoulders, and a thousand things to think of,— if it ain't torture."

"What business," retorted the exasperated woman, "had you got to go mixing yourself up with this bar-room gang at such a time as this, I'd like to know? You knew I was cleaning house, and that everything is in a heap, and that I've got more than my hands full; but it's just like you to go to getting up an election and such foolishness, right in the middle of all this mess!"

This assertion of Mrs. Cobleigh's was, despite its apparent fairness, unjust to Mr. Cobleigh. The time for holding the borough election had not been determined by him, and, in fact, he had had nothing in any way to do with it. The time was fixed by parties who could have been actuated by no design to interfere with Mrs. Cobleigh's domestic arrangements, as their action took place some considerable time prior to her birth. Still, it was a very good point to make, and the excellent woman sniffed in triumph as she delivered it.

Mr. Cobleigh uttered no word in response to this. He simply stared at her in blank astonishment while she was speaking, and when she finished he started out into the yard, as if that was a signal for him to go. He walked up to the carpet as if he was moving in his sleep, without knowledge of where he was going or what he was after. The instant he reached it a great change

came over him. His appearance of unconsciousness gave way to one of marvellous activity. With a half-suppressed scream he sprang upon the heap of woof and warp, and jumped up and down on it, and then kicked it viciously with both feet, and then jumped up and down again on it, to the unbounded amazement of his wife, who stood in the door watching him. Then he quietly gathered up the article in his arms and silently marched to the house with it, looking very much like an elephant backing into a circus-ring.

"What on earth is the matter with you, kicking that carpet about like that?" she demanded.

"None of your business," he snapped back, coloring in the face, and pushing by her into the house.

"Well, I *must* say!" commented Mrs. Cobleigh.

Throwing down the carpet as if it was a dog, he had suddenly discovered to be inhabited, he dashed out after the ice-chest, and immediately lugged that in, and then seized the bedstead and fairly whizzed it inside. Then he smashed his hat upon his head, and fled down town to collect his scattered and sadly demoralized thoughts.

## V.

## MR. COBLEIGH DOES IT.

LATE in the evening, when he returned, his faithful wife was in the kitchen stirring up emptings for to-morrow's bread, and taking advantage of her occupation, he got his material, and squared himself at the dining-room table in the preparation of a suitable response to the honor his fellow-citizens contemplated bestowing upon him.

Composition was no light matter with Mr. Cobleigh. He had had no call to venture into it beyond an occasional letter to some member of the family. But this was something far different from anything in that line, as he presently discovered. It seemed to require a great deal of screwing around on the chair, and a violent rubbing of his head, and a prodigious wrinkling of his brow, to get a start even.

He was thus engaged when Mrs. Cobleigh came in to prepare for retiring.

"For land's sake, what are you up to now?" was her terse inquiry.

"I'm writing a speech, if you want to know," he answered, with some resentment.

"A speech!" Mrs. Cobleigh uttered this in a tone of surprise that was very irritating.

"Yes, a speech! What of it?"

"What are you going to do with a speech?"

Mr. Cobleigh laid down his pencil and looked deliberately at the wife of his bosom.

"Well!" he finally blurted; "you are the dumbest woman I ever saw. What would I tell the masses when they called on me to lead them?"

This was calculated to be a poser, and to throw Mrs. Cobleigh into a state of confusion. The calculation was reasonable enough, but it miscarried. Without an instant's hesitation, she replied,—

"Tell them they'd better be about other business than getting drunk and kicking up a pow-wow over nothing."

There was something apparently derogatory to Mr. Cobleigh's personal value in the closing word of this unexpected reply, although it is likely she did not so intend it. Unfortunately, Mrs. Cobleigh had imbibed the strange notion that Politics and Debauchery were twin brothers who always went hand in hand, and was unable to disassociate the twain.

Mr. Cobleigh was suddenly taken with another season of difficulty to recover his breath, during which he stared at his excellent wife until his eyes fairly bulged. When he got his breath he gasped,—

"Well, may I be hornswoggled!" — hornswoggled was a term Mr. Cobleigh used only in cases of extreme necessity, and his use of it now showed how powerfully he was wrought upon, — "well, may I be hornswoggled if ever I saw such a woman as you are. You're enough to drive the Devil himself out of his wits."

"Then I'll go to bed, and get out of his way," was the ungracious rejoinder. And the lady was as good as her word, leaving her lord and master staring at the door through which she departed, in virtuous indignation.

When she was gone, Mr. Cobleigh devoted a couple of minutes in striding about the room and kicking over a chair, and setting it on its feet again. Then he smote his head with both of his hands several times in succession, and having thus refreshed himself he went back to his work.

He was not going to say much, as much was not necessary; but he was surprised, now that he got down to it, to find how great was a little, when face to face with the paper it was to go on. He screwed around on the chair, and clutched every hair in his head personally, and rubbed his scalp until it was inflamed, during the performance; and even with all these sources of inspiration it was long after midnight when he got through. Then he read it over several times, and liked the sound of it so much that he went to bed with a feeling of satisfaction.

*As has been intimated, there was not much in*

length to the speech, but it was full of nuggets of wisdom, sentiment, and eloquence, as the following copy bears abundant testimony :—

“Gentlemen and Fellow-Citizens :

[Mr. Cobleigh had some doubt as to the consistency of this combination, but put it in as a sort of temporary filling. He first contemplated “Ladies and Gentlemen,” but subsequent reflection led him to think that perhaps the fair sex would not be present, and, in doubt about this, he made it “Gentlemen and Fellow-Citizens,” to preserve the symmetry of its shape until he could know positively about the ladies. It was an admirable precaution.]

“The honor you seek to confer upon me comes so unexpected, that I feel totally unprepared to express to you the feelings of my breast.”

[This would not be strictly true, taken at the time of delivery, but the sentiment was so beautiful in itself, and so appropriate to the occasion, that the use of it appeared like an inspiration, and Mr. Cobleigh gladly fastened to it.]

“It is an honor I never dreamed of, and which I do not feel I am worthy to receive ; and standing before you as I now do, I feel almost dumfounded by what you have done. It comes so sudden and unexpected that I do not know what to tell you about it, only that I thank you very much. The movement you have inaugurated on this occasion has my hearty sympathy, as you all well know. I have felt, as you have all done, the corroding influence of the party in power.”

[“Corroding influence” was a term Mr. Cobleigh once saw in the printed report of a speech delivered in Congress, and it made such an impression upon him at the time that it stayed with him, and it now struck him as being highly desirable in this connection. It was certainly an imposing figure, and calculated to make itself felt.]

“And I stand ready with you this afternoon to hurl myself, in my feeble way, upon the ramparts of the enemy.”

[Mr. Cobleigh was nearly an hour carving out this bit of pure metal, but he felt amply repaid for his labor. The strength of his purpose to hurl himself blended prettily with the modest estimate of the force of the hurl, as indicated in the words, “my feeble way,” and made a very striking picture.]

“I look around upon the masses before me, and read in your honest faces the undying determination to stand by the right and beat treason down, and I take fresh courage to press onward in the battle, carrying high the standard you have placed in my hands. Again I thank you, gentlemen, for the unexpected and overpowering honor you have thrust upon me, and which I am so unworthy to bear.”

On the whole, this was a very good speech. It was not rambling, it was not airy, it was not a strain after metaphor. It was simply a straightforward piece of work, which covered the entire *ground*, and left nothing to be desired. Mr. Cob-

leigh could picture to himself the thunder of applause that would greet it.

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## VI.

## MR. COBLEIGH GETS DOWN TO BUSINESS.

THE next ambition in Mr. Cobleigh's breast was to commit his composition to memory. Even in the state of excitement he was in he could understand that thanking an assembly from manuscript for an unexpected honor they were conferring upon him had its drawbacks; and so he must commit it fully to memory. The spontaneity of the affair must be preserved, even if everything else was lost.

This task he undertook the next day. Mrs. Cobleigh was greatly scandalized to learn, on going to put up his dinner at breakfast, that he was not going to the factory, but had determined to stay at home to learn his speech. Poor woman! she could not understand the imperative necessity of the hour, nor his noble ambition to stay the flood of corruption by interposing his own body in the way. It was simply a matter of dollars and cents to her, and it made her sick to think of the sacrifice of these things which ~~he~~ was going to make. She expressed with freedom and vigor her views of this "folderol," but she could not change

him from his purpose, and sensibly abandoned the attempt, but compromised with her disappointment by secretly resolving to utilize him in every possible way in the furtherance of her domestic schemes.

During her preparation of the morning meal, Mr. Cobleigh reread the manuscript to himself, and felt proud of the result. In the freedom from the weariness of producing it the effort shone with increased lustre. Naturally enough, he desired to share this pleasure with the partner of his joys and sorrows. The partner aforesaid was dressed as on the day before. There were the same bare arms, the same torn skirt, the same dishevelled stockings, the same heated, flurried, aggressive countenance. The partner was darting in here and out there, with an air that showed she begrudged every morsel of time consumed in the unnecessary and uncalled-for performance of preparing the table. And yet, as Mr. Cobleigh thought of the beautiful work he had produced, of his marriage vow to cherish and protect her, of the future whose glory was now so far beyond her reach, his heart softened with tender emotions, and he was magnanimously drawn to bless her life, and lift her above the things of earth into the bower of clouds he had arranged for himself. With this worthy purpose he notified her of what was coming, and straightway began to bless her, not pausing to listen to the grateful *expressions* his fond heart was confident she

would shower upon him. And it is just as well he did n't. He read on, and she went on. He put all the impassioned feeling into the reading it was possible to do, while following her from the pantry to the kitchen, and from the kitchen to the dining-room, and keeping from under her feet when she was suddenly retracing her way. When he finished she said,—

“If you have got through with that stuff we will have breakfast, before everything on the table gets colder than a stone.”

“Stuff!” In vain the standard-bearer of the party of reform dove down into the very recesses of his vocabulary for language suitable to express himself. It was no use. He reeled from the undertaking in the exhaustion of despair, and sank into his place at the table with as much emphasis as if he had been loaded with old iron. Brief though her remark was, volumes could not have flattened him out more effectually.

This was simply the beginning of a series of shocks that assailed the citadel of reform through that day. With his breakfast ended, Mr. Cobleigh retreated to his sanctuary to begin the operation of transferring his speech to the retina of his mind. Here he was apparently safe, although somewhat trammelled in his movements by the surplus furniture temporarily stored there. He pushed aside the high lamp, and albums, and vases, to make room on the little table for his manuscript, and then fell to work.

The more Mr. Cobleigh repeated the passages to fasten them in his mind, the more fully his nature became impregnated with the lofty sentiments therein contained, and the more his body grew in sympathy with the glow. And so from standing still at the table he got to moving about, and to gesticulating with his right arm, by which he would sweep the air as if to indicate the breadth of his views by calling attention to the breadth of the horizon, or would level it straight ahead, as if pointing with scorn at the unprincipled party in power. As he progressed, he became so absorbed in his subject as to be totally oblivious to his surroundings, and thus it was not a matter of surprise that, in a movement backward, expressive of embarrassment at the unexpected honor of the nomination, he should step on the end of a rocker, and overturn a chair with a toilet pitcher and bowl thereon, although he appeared to be somewhat surprised himself. In truth, Mr. Cobleigh was so deeply affected as he looked upon the shivered china, that he involuntarily exclaimed, "Holy shortcake!" and stood for a whole moment staring at the wreck. Then, as if suddenly inspired, he hastily gathered up the pieces, and stowed them back of a cupboard.

He had scarcely returned to his labor when Mrs. Cobleigh appeared at the door with the announcement that the kitchen carpet was ready to beat.

There was something so entirely at variance between *purifying* a political atmosphere and sweep-

ing a carpet, that the standard-bearer of the great reform movement was obliged to have the information repeated before he could fully credit his senses with having received it.

Of course there was a violent protest on his part against the carpet operation. The very idea was repulsive to him. What was the matter with his wife? Was she mentally diseased? Could it be possible that the finer sensibilities of her nature were perfectly dead, so she could no longer discern the difference between the mighty effort of a community to shake off an incubus and that of a man to shake a carpet? His first impulse, and reasonable enough it appeared, was to cut his throat where he stood, and end a blighted existence on the spot; but on her threatening to go out and shake the carpet herself, in full sight of all the neighbors, he modified his views and dashed out at the carpet himself, taking occasion to announce incidentally, on the way, that after he was dead she would be sorry for this.

In response, she told him to be careful in beating it, as it was about in pieces already.

Still later, when once more bathing in the glories of ennobling sentiment, the unhappy woman appeared again, and electrified him with the intelligence that there was a tub of water to be emptied out. Mr. Cobleigh was but flesh and blood, after all, and his whole nature shrank from this degrading office.

“What on earth do you mean by coming to

me with such devilish stuff?" he excitedly demanded.

"Well, things have come to a mighty queer pass if you have got above doing anything about your own house," she retorted.

"Great heavens! have n't you got any sense at all?" he cried, "or don't you know anything whatever? I should think you'd be ashamed of yourself. You expect I can prepare myself for the responsibilities of a public station, and empty out slops, and do all kinds of bugger-lugging at the same time. Here the people of this community have selected me from a thousand to carry their standard in a desperate fight against corruption and fraud, and you have got such a one-horse idea of the importance of my position that you expect I can empty a tub of suds just the same as if I had n't been picked out to lead the masses to victory. A devilish nice-looking spectacle I'd make, wouldn't I, carrying out a big reform and a tub of dirty water at the same time? And a nice help to your husband you are, ain't you, expecting him to shine in public life and do your drudgery too? I should think you'd be ashamed of yourself."

Mr. Cobleigh struck the table with his fist as he delivered this, and immediately inquired of Heaven why his life was prolonged under such discouraging circumstances; whereupon Mrs. Cobleigh said she would empty the tub herself; it might cripple her for life in doing it, but she had always had to slave and toil and do the work of two

women, and she always expected to. And then she started off as if she really entertained a design to carry the tub herself. Whereupon Mr. Cobleigh smote his two fists together with great violence, and vehemently swore he was half a mind to let the world go to thunder, and finish his existence on some foreign island in a far-off sea.

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## VII.

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The meeting was called to order by Mr. Gagg, who read the call.

“Gentlemen,” said Mr. Gagg, “it is first in order to choose a chairman to preside over this intelligent gathering. Our coming together being, as the call hints, an entirely spontaneous matter, produced by the pressure of a serious emergency, there has been, of course, no premeditation, no preparation for organization. It is natural that in the uprising of an outraged constituency the ob-

ject, rather than the course leading to it, should be primary, but at the same time system is of importance, and I suggest, as being entirely consistent with the object that has brought us together, that a chairman of the meeting be chosen to preside over its deliberations. Gentlemen, will you signify your pleasure in the choice?"

As Mr. Gagg concluded, his glance unconsciously fell upon Mr. Cobleigh. And as he did so that gentleman cried out,—

"I nominate the Hon. Mr. Guhll as chairman of the meeting."

"Second the motion," promptly came from another part of the hall.

At this juncture it was evident that the Hon. Mr. Guhll, who was looking very much embarrassed at the unexpected demonstration in his behalf, was about to rise and protest against the honor. But Mr. Gagg was too quick for such a move, and before the honorable gentleman could get to his legs, the motion was put and carried, and carried with a shout that shook the building.

No one could help being gratified by such an outburst of public favor, and even the well-tried face of the Hon. Mr. Guhll flushed with a natural color as he stepped up to the platform and laid his hat on its crown on the table. There was a hush in the audience.

"Friends," said the gentleman in a tone of blended affection and dignity, and looking into his

hat, "I would fail of the noblest attribute of the human heart, that of gratitude, if I were not deeply affected by this mark of esteem that you have shown me. I did not come in here with the expectation of taking any part, unless it was the very humblest, in these proceedings. I was attracted here, I must say, by my sympathy with the object that has drawn you together this afternoon (applause), and you can judge of my astonishment at hearing my name offered as the chairman of your convention. Had my emotions been under better control, I would have risen at once and declined the honor I am so unworthy to bear (applause), but before I could recover myself your generous action had made me your chairman; and as I make it a point to shrink from no duty my fellow-citizens have called me to perform, I shall try to overcome the sense of my own unfitness, and do the best in my humble power to serve your interests on this important occasion. (Applause.) There is no need to assure you of my hearty sympathy with the noble purpose that has brought you together. (Tremendous applause.) The masses rising in their might to vindicate their rights and to rebuke a villainous ring (applause) is one of the grandest spectacles vouchsafed to man (applause), and I rejoice to be considered worthy to take a part in this forward movement. (Applause.) Gentlemen, again permit me to assure you of my deep gratitude for this manifestation of your generous confidence and esteem. (Vociferous applause.)

"I suppose the first business we must attend to is the choice of a secretary to record the transactions of the meeting. Will you please signify your preference?"

Mr. Gagg's name was moved and seconded, and as promptly carried, and that gentleman blushingly accepted the honor.

"If I understand the spirit of the call," said the chairman, "which I had the pleasure of perusing in the paper, and which informed me of your honorable gathering, this meeting is called to protest against the reprehensible way our borough affairs are administered, and to nominate a ticket favorable to the interests of the community at large, to be submitted to the suffrages of the people of Danbury at the coming election. This being the case, the next business in order, I judge, is the nomination of the ticket. How will you proceed to this business, gentlemen?"

At this Mr. D'Coy sprang to his feet, and proposed, as being the most convenient and expeditious way, that a committee of five be appointed to select the names for the ticket. Mr. D'Coy's proposition favorably struck the assemblage of indignant tax-payers, and while he was stroking his whisker it was adopted. The selection of the committee was next in order. Mr. Stoohl rose, and gravely suggested, with a propitiatory air to all present, that to save time and useless discussion the chairman appoint the committee. Hereupon the Hon. Mr. Guhll took occasion to thank the

gentleman for the honor proposed, but, he said, the appointing of so important a committee was a grave responsibility, requiring wisdom, judgment, and experience in its discharge, and he —

Mr. Stoothl interrupted to say that he understood, as did the meeting, that these qualities were necessary, and that was just the reason he proposed their honored chairman for the office, knowing, when he did so, that he was but echoing the sentiments of the industrious and intelligent gentlemen about him. A murmur of applause followed this announcement, and before it died away Mr. Gagg sprang to his feet and cried, —

“It is moved and seconded that our noble chairman select the committee to present a ticket for borough officers. Those in favor of the motion will please signify it by saying aye.”

It was a perfect hurricane of ayes:

“It is scarcely necessary to call the noes,” said Mr. Gagg, with a triumphant smile, in which his fellow-citizens joined.

The Hon. Mr. Guhll modestly thanked the gentlemen for their confidence; and looking into the crown of his hat, as if he was really reading the names from a list therein, announced the members of the committee. The gentlemen selected retired for deliberation. During their absence the Hon. Mr. Guhll called on Mr. D'Coy for a speech, and that gentleman responded in a vigorous onslaught upon corruption in office and politicians generally, and wound up with a glow-

ing tribute to the nobility of the masses in their struggles against venality.

As he closed, and while the building was quivering with the shock of applause, the committee returned and made their report.

The ticket selected was as follows:—

*For Warden*, Joseph Fangs.

*For Burgess*, William Bangs, John Hangs, William B. Cobleigh, Tollman Dangs, Irwin Spangs.

*For Clerk*, Isaiah Richardson.

*For Treasurer*, Robert Mangs.

*For Board of Relief*, Everett Tangs, Myron Willoughby, Silas Langs.

*For Auditor*, Joseph Whangs.

The reading of the names was greeted with approval, and the ticket entire was adopted amid tumultuous cheering, in which the throats of the reformers were stretched to the utmost. One man, in an obscure position under the gallery, intimated rather broadly that there was a pretty large per cent of 'Angs on the ticket, but he was frowned down summarily, and seeing that he was not sympathized with, he took his departure in a huffy manner. Three or four equally sore-headed persons followed him out. The convention was well rid of this element, which, if retained, was designed to make trouble. The 'Angs were earnest laborers in the reform vineyard, or the committee would not have chosen them, and that the committee was of the right sort was guaranteed by the fact that the honorable chairman formed

it. Then again the 'Angs were from the ranks of the same party that had held the honorable chairman and Messrs. Gagg, D'Coy, and Stoohl, and certainly ought to be well known to them.

The Hon. Mr. Guhl now rose, and said that while he was pleased with the ticket generally, he was particularly gratified with the selection of one of the standard-bearers in the impending struggle against corruption. He knew him to be a man of unblemished integrity, and one of the most sincere in the great movement they had met to further. He trusted the meeting would have the pleasure of hearing from his honored friend, William B. Cobleigh, Esq.

The announcement of the name took a tremulous hold upon the enthusiasm of the audience, and appeared to be dragging it out by the roots. The name of Cobleigh was cried all over the house, to the great agitation of that excellent gentleman, who was seated in the body of the hall, well up to the front, where he had taken the liveliest interest in all the proceedings.

He had been over his speech so many times before coming to the hall that he believed it was fully gathered in his mind, and so gave himself up largely to the exercises about him. Still, he occasionally withdrew within himself to gloat over the choice sentences, and to speculate upon the surprise his acquaintances were going to feel when the grand thoughts flowed in streams of graceful expression from his lips. They would little sus-

pect that he had previously written and committed to memory his speech of acceptance.

He was in a tremor from the moment his name was read on the ticket until the chairman called for him, — in a tremor of fear that his fellow-citizens might be deterred from calling him out through concern for his embarrassment and fear of his failure, and thus lose the electricity he had prepared for them. The reflection made him quite sick, until the Hon. Mr. Guhll put the doubt to flight. Then followed the shouting of his name, and Mr. Cobleigh felt, as he subsequently expressed it, as if a furnace door had been suddenly opened within an inch of his face. How he got to his feet he did not know. He got there; however, and had sufficient presence of mind to turn about and face the audience, but beyond that there was but little intelligent action. He saw the faces — expectant faces, hopeful faces, curious faces — turned upon him. For a flash they were distinct and stationary, and then they whirled around, and rose and fell in an undistinguishable mass. His face felt puffed up to a degree that was threatening to close his eyes, which were at the same time filling with water. There came a relief in the applause that greeted his rising, but when that ceased it seemed as if the silence was a blister that completely covered his remaining confidence and took it from him. It was then he fully comprehended how great is the difference *between* reciting a speech in a room by himself

and delivering it in the midst of a multitude. His knees trembled, his tongue grew to double its usual size, while chills and perspiration fought for the possession of his body. His fellow-laborers in the field of reform appeared to be so many executioners after his life, and he was really obliged to make an effort to keep himself from falling upon his knees there and then, and begging for their mercy. But he must speak—he must get his tongue away from the roof of his mouth—he must do something; he could not stand there and stare at them another moment without covering himself with eternal ridicule. With a powerful wrench he freed his fettered tongue, and gurgled,—

“Ladies, gentlemen, and fellow-citizens—”

[Mr. Cobleigh realized at once the blunder thus made, but it was too late to recover, and he hoped, with the self-deception common to immatured orators, that the audience would not discover it, being of the belief that the agitation he experienced was epidemic. But with the fondling of this hope occurred the loss of the thread of his discourse. It went from him in a flash, and he immediately found himself in an appalling maze, and fell violently to work to plunge out again, in doing which he brought to the surface the following fragments:]

“The honor you have given me I feel as you have done. And I feel ready to hurl myself on the enemy. I am—I believe, and I know you all do. I—the party in power are corroding the

offices, and that the standard-bearer you have put in my hands."

[This was perfectly dreadful. He knew every misstep he was making, but there was no help. He was growing blind and crazed, but he pushed madly ahead, making the most frantic plunges in a direction that was presumably toward land.]

"I see your honest faces, and—and—and when I. Let us take more courage in this unexpected honor. Let—let us—us—us. Oh!"

And Mr. Cobleigh, completely undone, sank with a thud into his chair, while great drops of ice-water ran down his face and back. The audience looked at each other for an instant in a bewildered way, and then followed the lead of Messrs. D'Coy and Stoohl in a tremendous burst of applause.

Their appreciation gratified while it pained him. If the snarled bits of wreck he had brought to the surface impressed them, what would have been their reception of the completed structure? He groaned as he thought of it.

It struck him as being phenomenal, that while he was on his feet the points in his discourse deserted him, but now he had sat down they came back to him in distinct form; and as one after another stood out from the impenetrable gloom into which they had so abruptly disappeared, he groaned afresh.

women, and she always expected to. And then she started off as if she really entertained a design to carry the tub herself. Whereupon Mr. Cobleigh smote his two fists together with great violence, and vehemently swore he was half a mind to let the world go to thunder, and finish his existence on some foreign island in a far-off sea.

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No one could help being gratified by such an outburst of public favor, and even the well-tried face of the Hon. Mr. Guhll flushed with a natural color as he stepped up to the platform and laid his hat on its crown on the table. There was a hush in the audience.

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There was live work in the gathering for a half-hour or so, and then the reform ticket, with three exceptions, was adopted as the ticket of the "Outs" in the coming election. Messrs. Cobleigh, Richardson, and Willoughby, of the reform ticket, were left off, and Messrs. Jangs, Nangs, and Rangs taken in their place.

Mr. Cobleigh was not seriously grieved by the exception made of himself by the "Outs." The more he reflected upon it, the better he was pleased. His election was sure any way, because of the intense desire for reform among the masses, and so he could afford to do without the support of the "Outs," while being thrown overboard by a partisan caucus was an act of martyrdom which had its attractions and its advantages.

The Hon. Mr. Guhll, and Messrs. D'Coy, Gagg, and Stoohl were inclined to be grieved at the action of the "Outs" in throwing out Messrs. Cobleigh, Willoughby, and Richardson. If the "Outs" were going to take any of the ticket, they argued, why not take the whole of it? This is what they could not understand, but Mr. Cobleigh's firm faith in the masses to right all wrong tended much to reconcile them, and they went into the work with the old fervor. As for Mr. Cobleigh and the other reformers, they redoubled their exertions, and were full of zeal that consumed.

It soon coming to his ears that a serenade was to be given him on election night, the ambition to

make a dazzling oratorical flight was again aroused, and he at once set about to prepare a suitable response. By using the parts saved from the wreck of the former effort, with a little additional that was fresh and appropriate, he succeeded in producing something calculated to electrify his fellow-citizens while it adorned himself.

He firmly resolved to have *this* speech so firmly imbedded in the end of his tongue as to preclude the possibility of its getting away without his consent, and with this object he impressed his heir into the service as a sort of combined critic and prompter, who held the manuscript, commented upon the points, lifted him over the obstructions, and enjoyed the performance amazingly. It was a beautiful spectacle thus presented by the father and son. It would have nourished the observer to have seen the two in an upper room by themselves, to have watched the glow of satisfaction on the father's face, as he progressed through the easy passages, change to one of solicitude as he struck the more difficult parts. The color of excitement flaming his countenance, as he mentally clutched space in a desperate endeavor to get hold of the forward end of the next sentence, formed a marked and interesting contrast to the expression of calm waiting on the face of the copy-holder.

A no less pleasing feature of the little scene was the power of self-control Mr. Cobleigh exercised. There were passages of great power into which he wanted to launch himself with thunder-

ing effect, but he knew if he did it would reveal his presence in the house to his wife, and she would immediately swoop down on him to perform some menial act. So he held himself in, and was nearly strangled thereby.

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## X.

## THE UPRISE OF THE MASSES.

THE election took place on Monday. Mr. Cobleigh spoke of it with fervor, as "the uprising of the masses to hurl corruption down." It was an eventful day to him,—a day of intense nervous excitement. He did not even go home to dinner. He said he had n't the time, but the truth was there was a lurking fear in his breast that if Mrs. Cobleigh got hold of him she would find so much for him to do that he could n't get back again. He contented himself with an oyster stew at a restaurant, and while it was cooling, he refreshed his memory with glances at the copy of his speech in response to the serenade.

The polls were open for four hours. The "Ins" and the "Outs" and the reformers worked hard. Teams were run, tickets were urged, the back-sliders looked up, and everybody got in everybody's way and tried to climb over each other, and did many other things to advance the interests of their respective ambitions.

Mr. Cobleigh was in a whirl. He peddled tickets, and went after voters, and looked after this and that, and fought against a split ticket, which was a clever imitation of the reform ticket, and had the names of Jangs, Nangs, and Rangs inserted in the place of those of Cobleigh, Richardson, and Willoughby. Toward the close of the time allotted for voting, Mr. Cobleigh got so nervous he could not stay near the polls, and retreated to the restaurant, leaving Master Cobleigh to ascertain and bring him the result.

There he remained, drinking innumerable cups of coffee as a motive for staying, until the news came.

It was an electric shock to him.

The reform ticket, *as adopted by the "Outs,"* was victorious, Jangs, Nangs, and Rangs barely getting an election, but getting it just the same. Mr. Cobleigh could not credit the intelligence, but the truth, with its crushing load of humiliation, was finally realized. The "Outs" saved themselves by adopting the reform ticket, and Jangs, Nangs, and Rangs were squeezed in on the split tickets. The masses that uprose polled one hundred and twenty-five "square" votes, and seventy-five "splits," which had been imposed upon their guileless nature by political wolves in the pelts of reformed sheep.

Mr. Cobleigh had received one hundred and twenty-five votes, out of a poll of eleven hundred! It made the standard-bearer in the reform move-

ment very, very sick. He struck out for home at once. He had no object in view only to get out of sight of everybody, especially of the masses.

He was almost exhausted when he got there, and wholly crazed. His wife saw him as he came, and with the quick instinct of her sex saw at once the deplorable change in his appearance.

"What's the matter with you *now?*" she demanded, with the promptness of aroused sympathy.

He gasped out the calamitous result of the election.

"What did I tell you all along?" she said. "I knew they was fooling you all the time with their gas about reform, and the uprising of the masses—"

"Cuss the masses!" moaned their standard-bearer.

"Well, I'm glad it's over," she added, sympathetically, "and I hope you have now got through making a fool of yourself, and will act as you oughter. Squat down and get your supper into you as quick as you can, for I want you to put up the parlor curtains, so I can get the rooms to rights before bedtime. You've been off all day doing nothing, and now I guess it won't hurt you to help me a little."

And thus the defeated standard-bearer in the great reform movement sank to rest in the sympathetic bosom of his family.

## THE POWER OF MUSIC.

WE were in Morris's music store for a few moments, the other afternoon. Young Mr. Dauchy, who is quite a musician, wanted us to hear an adaptation from the "Chimes of Normandy," which he thought was a very neat thing. We love music; we become absorbed in it, and saturated with it. It lifts us above the world, and the things of time, and leaves us floating noiselessly through the atmosphere of fond hopes and sweet memories. We were glad when young Mr. Dauchy proposed to play this piece.

Mr. Blowah was in the store at the time. He was telling us of a hunting expedition the day before, in which he had killed three birds in one shot, when the music commenced. He paused then. We turned our full attention to the instrument. The player dashed into the overture. The movement was excellent, if not brilliant. We concentrated every thought upon it. Mr. Blowah said,—

"You are fond of music?"

We briefly said, "Yes."

"So 'm I. There ain't nobody fonder of music than I am. I ain't any player myself, but I can tell when a piece is played right as well as any of 'em. They can't fool me on music."

There was a spirited dash in the overture at

this juncture. We were charmed. Mr. Blowah said,—

“Did you ever hear old Gibbs, of Slawson, play a violin?”

We had not heard Gibbs. In a tone of as little interest as was possible, we said, “No.”

“Is that so? Why, I thought everybody had heard him. He can more than shake a bow. He ain’t got no equal in these parts, you bet. I wish you could hear him, you’re so fond of music. If you could hear him play the ‘Blue Danube,’ you would be so taken up with it that you could n’t speak a word.”

Mr. Blowah paused about eight seconds, in which space the “Chimes” floated sweetly, when he again observed,—

“That’s pretty good playing, ain’t it?”

“Yes,” very briefly.

“I’ve got a capital ear for music,” he continued. “I can tell in a minute when a piece is played right. There’s a chap up in New Milford who has got a piano that’s one of the best strung I ever saw. He can more than handle it, too. I can’t think of his name. Perhaps you know him.”

So perfectly délicious was the strain now given, that we could not speak. We could only shake our head slowly.

“No? Well, that’s odd. It’s curious I can’t think of his name. It’s Morgan, or Harrigan, or something like that. There’s a *gan* in it, anyway. It does beat all that I can’t think of that name.

It's just as familiar to me as yours. I wish you'd go up there some day and hear him play. He can play the 'Devil's Hornpipe' and 'Home, Sweet Home' at the same time. He's a perfect wonder on the piano. Oh, you must go and hear him, if you want to know what music is. I could sit and hear him all day without breathing."

Grandly beautiful came the air, as he ceased. Our perturbed spirit fell into the sweet harmony and glided —

"Did you ever hear Thomas's orchestra?" inquired Mr. Blowah.

A nod of the head, half exhausted at that, was all the response we could make.

"How'd you like him?"

With a powerful wrench we tore ourselves from the delicious air long enough to say, "Very much."

"He's the boy to handle music, ain't he? I heard him in New York when he first began his concerts. I always go to hear the big guns. If there's one thing I like it's good music. I could hear good music forever, I believe. It takes right hold of me, an' I'm all eaten up with it."

He paused to relight his cigar. A bit of the "Chimes" like a sound of silver bells was being given. The execution was very fine. We rushed to embrace it.

Mr. Blowah said, —

"The next time you go to the city let me know. I should like to take you around to a friend of

mine in Fourteenth Street. He has got a two-thousand-dollar piano, and they say it's the best toned instrument in New York. And he can more'n handle it. He's played ever since he was eight years old, and takes to music as natural as a duck to water. You'd enjoy hearing him play, I can tell you, and I'd like to go there with you. What's the matter? Ain't you feeling well?"

Before we could make any reply to this unexpected interrogation the "Chimes" ceased.

"You move around so restless, and look so white in the face," said Mr. Blowah, eying us anxiously, "that I thought you might be sick. You ought to get out more where you can hear music, you're so fond of it. It will do you good."

We gratefully thanked him for his kind interest, and crawled back to the office.

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### *A DIAGNOSIS OF MOVING.*

THERE appears to be three stages to a moving. In this respect it is something like a disease. First there are the symptoms, then follows the attack, and after that comes the convalescence.

The symptoms are the evidence of the calamity which in moving are known as "packing." There is no particular time set to "pack up." It depends on the amount of nervous force possessed by the

woman of the house. The more nervous she is the earlier the packing commences, and the more thorough it is.

About two weeks before you move you notice a shrinking in the goblets. The dozen complete ones have shrunk down to a single cracked member of the order, and you feed your guest lemonade from a teacup, while you modestly imbibe yours from the dipper. The whole goblets are packed up.

Pretty soon the spoons melt away, leaving but one companion to do the stirring for the entire family, with what awkward assistance a knife-handle will render.

Then follow the surplus cups. They go as effectually as if they had been driven into the earth by a trip-hammer, and the desolation they leave behind is great indeed.

As time advances the symptoms grow more pronounced, and just preceding the breaking out of the disease itself they are quite violent.

The extra plates follow the extra cups, and the knives and forks ditto. Then such trifles as the napkins and salt-cellars go in a lump, and when the last meal is served, with a knuckle of ham which there is no time to dust, and bread which there is no need to butter, the disease has taken a good square hold, and can safely be depended upon to have its run.

At this juncture one home is broken into two *homes*, and a man with so much wealth is apt to

lose his head. After losing his head he begins to lose his hide. About the same time the woman loses her reckoning. Then the carman, who is an hour and a half late, comes in and completes the picture.

The disease rarely runs less than twenty-four hours. But it don't lose a minute of the time.

As in packing up, so in putting down, the prevailing idea is to get everything somewhere, and to get it there in the most direct way possible. This explains why the stove-lifter is put in the bureau drawer, and the picture nails in the tub with the tinware.

In the new home the kitchen stove is left in the hall. The bedding is piled up on the pictures in the parlor. The best bedstead is placed in the dining-room, and the extension table in the sitting-room, and between the four apartments are barriers of carpets, knick-knacks, boxes, and the like.

At night the carman composedly drives off, with a parting look at you, and the débris that surrounds you, that plainly says, "I guess I 've fixed you."

We have come to the belief that a carman never moved his own family.

Then follows the convalescence. The haste with which a man puts things anywhere just to get them out of the way when moving, is repented of in the leisure of the unpacking and putting to rights. The recovery from the shock of the disease is necessarily slow. It requires days. This is caused by the embarrassment of riches which a

man finds himself surrounded with. He is astonished at the number and variety of articles that presumably belong to him, and which there is no time nor opportunity to shoulder off on some other family. He almost curses his prosperity.

He looks over his possessions and then over the amount of room he has got, and wonders where on earth he is going to store his wealth. The light his wife throws on to the subject is so brilliant that it dazzles and confuses rather than clears.

It frequently happens—so frequently, in fact, that it never occurs any other way—that the two vary in their preference for a place to begin work, and so mutable are things earthly that the two generally reverse the order of procedure, the man bringing up in the woman's position and she falling naturally into his.

No one thing is persisted in. When a carpet is partly down is the time to begin to put up the bed. And that should be left half finished to give one of the stoves a start. This gives time for reflection, and reflection shows that the base-boards of the half-carpeted room are not clean, and the carpet should not go down until they are. Everybody will admit that it is easier to take up the half of a carpet than the whole of it.

Moving is like tumbling into a ditch down one bank and crawling out again up the other bank. We go from order into chaos, and from chaos we gradually work, stage by stage, back to order again, but coming out on the opposite side.

Any defects in packing up show up in a glaring light in the unpacking. Fortunately, people who move are married, and so have some one always convenient to lay the blame on. Otherwise, moving would be simply unendurable.

About the first thing to be done in the new house on the first night is to get a bed up. The next thing is to climb over a variety of articles and get into it. The next day the bed can be taken down so that the carpet may be laid.

Once in a while a man thinks he will surprise and delight his wife by doing something unexpected for her. So while she is getting to rights at one end of the house he puts down a carpet all alone by himself at the other end, and gets nearly all the furniture belonging to the room in its place before she discovers what he is doing, and also that he has left the papers from under the carpet. She admires his motive, of course, but is so conservative in the expression of her gratitude that much of its significance is lost.

But the convalescence proceeds. The knuckle of ham comes out again, and is finished. The caster is found. The butter-dish appears, and the butter itself is rescued from its perilous surroundings. The next day the teacups begin to show themselves, and before night most of the knives and forks have got around. On the third day the napkins and salt-cellars, with two or three spoons, fall into the line, and on the fourth day these are joined by the goblets and the rest of the spoons.

By the time the week is out most of the table articles have put in an appearance, and shortly after the kitchen stove begins to draw, and now matters progress without difficulty, and the convalescence ends in restored health.

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### THE PRACTICAL SIDE OF LOVE.

FOR a year or more the two had "kept company." He was a young man with nothing to depend upon but his two arms at his trade. She was the daughter of poor, hard-working parents, pretty well along in life at that. She was a very young and quite fair girl, whose time was devoted to helping her aged mother in the cares of the home. The three lived happily and comfortably together, the man's earnings being just sufficient to keep them in food and clothes, and a roof over their head. When Cyrille's lover came, the old folks fell to planning for the future. In the perspective was a home provided with a stalwart son, and kept beautiful by an earnest, faithful daughter. At its front was a porch upon which the sunlight ever rested. Under the porch they themselves sat all through the summer day, while about their feet played the happy grandchildren.

Cyrille herself worked cheerily and hopefully about the house, her glad songs making music

through all the rooms, and charming the birds that swayed to and fro on the maple outside the door, and the bees that gathered the sweets from the blossoms under the window. So happy was Cyrille in her love, her hope, her dream! Every duty was so light, every effort so easy; and all out doors, the trees, the flowers, the sunlight, were so much more beautiful than they had ever been before.

Cyrille's lover worked steadily at the factory, as full of hope as was the girl he was to marry. It was hard work and long hours, but John did not much mind them, because he was always thinking of what they were leading up to, and that itself was so much better than anything else on earth that it was well worth double the work and double the hours, were it possible to compass them. Not a very handsome man, nor a particularly brilliant man, was John, but he made up in an earnest willingness what he lacked in looks and mental development. More than made it up, thought the old people, while Cyrille never once thought but that John was just as handsome and full as brilliant as any man who walked the earth; so tenderly charitable is love, so hopeful of its own.

But there came a time when work at his factory grew slack. The hours became less and the pay less. Week after week this shortening continued, and John's heart grew faint. But Cyrille did not lose her courage, or, if she did, no one knew it. She sang just the same, and her face, when it

appeared, was just as sunny and hopeful. To John she was the same cheerful, happy body as before. The more discouraged he grew the more hopeful she became, and the cloud could not exist where such a steady flow of sunshine was bearing upon it, and so with her John would take heart despite himself.

Still the factory grew quieter and quieter, and one day it became very still,—the stillness of one that was dead. In vain John sought work elsewhere. There was no room for him. He was obliged to give up his boarding-place, and having nowhere else to go, he went to live with Cyrille's people. It was a happy day for Cyrille. Every day she had her lover with her, and when the night came they were not far separated, because the one roof sheltered them. No cloud chilled her dear heart. He was with her, and she was satisfied.

But John was ill at ease. Daily he sought work here, there, but no work came. The days melted into weeks, and the weeks made months. Three months had passed. Cyrille and her mother went away to spend the afternoon with a friend. Shortly before the hour for tea they returned, and Cyrille found a note on the stand in her room, as she went there to remove her hat and cape. It was directed in pencil, on the outside, to "Cyrille," in John's well-known hand.

A chill passed over the girl as she picked it up. There was a premonition of a great trouble in

its mysterious appearance. She did not look for a note. She expected to find him at home, or if not there, that he would soon come. There was no reason for a note at all unless he was going away unexpectedly, or was going to — She shivered all over at the dreadful thought. It was full a moment before she could open the paper to read its contents. Her fingers trembled and her face was colorless. Then she opened it. The contents were very brief. They said :—

DEAR FRIEND,— I 'm sorry for what I 'm going to do, but I can't help myself. I am out of work, and can't see any prospect of getting it, and I have been all over, and it is no good. There 's no chance for me to do anything, and so there 's no sight for our getting married, and so I have concluded to make a change. A woman what keeps a boarding-house wants me to marry her, and we will be married to-night. She 's got a good business, nearly twenty boarders, and she expects more. Hoping you will always be happy, I sign myself,

Yours forever,

JOHN.

Cyrille's venerable father immediately brought suit against John for three months' board, in the hope to save something from the wreck.

In that hope we join.

## GETTING HER HAT.

THE house-cleaning being over with, the female mind has taken a full grasp of the millinery problem. It is a very difficult matter to settle, this getting a covering for the female head. Days are devoted to it. Hours of anxious thought are given up to it. There are so many things to consider in connection with it,—things that men do not understand, and consequently can have no sympathy with.

Her complexion is one thing. Is the prevailing color suitable to it? If not, how can a compromise with fashion be made, so that the sensibility of the public (which is other women) shall not be shocked? The shape of her face is another important item. Is the prevailing form of hat adapted to it? If not, what style that will do comes the nearest to the leading style? These are very weighty matters, and must be carefully weighed before action is taken.

Still another important subject is the making over of last season's hat. What trimmings can be used that have been used before? Not alone taste, but economy as well, is concerned here. In no place does the economy of women show out as in the working over of an old hat into a new one. Of course it requires time, and close thought, and *shrewd judgment*, and keen management, but suc-

cess is sure to follow, and the pride she takes in exhibiting the triumph of her genius, and comparing it with the new hat of a neighbor who never has any tact in making over and saving, is a genuine pleasure, and pays for all the trouble, to say nothing of the money saved. We have known a hat thus made, costing about four dollars, to look fully as good as a four-dollar hat which was of new material throughout.

Then there is still another matter that must not be lost sight of. This is the hat the woman next door is going to have. Her hat must n't conflict with this hat. There is considerable anxiety involved. She must know what kind of a hat that woman is going to have before she can get her own. Her hat must n't be like it. She can't copy after *her*. She must be first, or nothing at all.

We have come to believe that the woman next door, or any other woman in the neighborhood, never get ahead in any particular, because their hats are so faulty.

Why are they so unfortunate in their taste? Why will the broad-faced woman wear a narrow brim? And why does the thin-faced woman affect the very broadest brim? And why does the very florid-faced lady take on so conspicuous a hat? And why will the pale woman go to such lengths in color, and the dark-faced woman plunge into the brightest yellow?

Then, again, there is the struggle at the milliner's. We are not so ungallant as to claim a woman

does n't make up her mind as to what sort of hat she will wear before she goes after it. She knows what she wants, of course, but there is a delirious pleasure in trying on all the hats in the shop. And she does it so neatly, and comments so naturally on the imperfections or inconsistencies of the wear, that one would think she was really trying to be suited with each effort. Such observations as the following are but samples of the many that greet the milliner: "O, I never could wear that!" "There, do you think that's becoming?" "If it was n't for the frizzes, I could wear a hat set back." "It turns up too much at the side." "He don't like a hat *over* my face." "My face is too broad for me to wear a hat *off* my face." Unless the woman is at her own milliner's, the following remark invariably winds up all the others:—

"If I cannot find anything to suit me better, I will come back."

She always finds it.

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#### A FEMALE BASE-BALL CLUB.

THE only attempt on record of Danbury trying to organize a female base-ball club occurred last week. It was a rather incipient affair, but it demonstrated everything necessary, and in that particular answered every purpose. The idea was

cogitated and carried out by six young ladies. It was merely designed for an experiment on which to base future action. The young ladies were at the house of one of their number when the subject was brought up. The premises are spacious, and include quite a piece of turf, hidden from the street by several drooping, luxuriant, old-fashioned apple-trees. The young lady of the house has a brother who is fond of base-ball, and has the necessary machinery for a game. This was taken out on the turf under the trees. The ladies assembled, and divided themselves into two nines of three each. The first three took the bat, and the second three went to the bases, one as catcher, one as pitcher, and the other as chaser, or, more technically, fielder. The pitcher was a lively brunette, with eyes full of dead earnestness. The catcher and batter were blondes, with faces aflame with expectation. The pitcher took the ball, braced herself, put her arm straight out from her shoulder, then moved it around to her back without modifying in the least its delightful frigidity, and then threw it. The batter did not catch it. This was owing to the pitcher looking directly at the batter when she aimed it. The fielder got a long pole and soon succeeded in poking the ball from an apple-tree back of the pitcher, where it had lodged. Business was then resumed again, although with a faint semblance of uneasiness generally visible.

The pitcher was very red in the face, and said "I declare" several times. This time she took a

more careful aim, but still neglected to look in some other direction than toward the batter, and the ball was presently poked out of another tree.

"Why, this is dreadful!" said the batter, whose nerves had been kept at a pretty stiff tension.

"Perfectly dreadful!" chimed in the catcher, with a long sigh.

"I think you had better get up in one of the trees," mildly suggested the fielder to the batter.

The observations somewhat nettled the pitcher, and she declared she would not try again, whereupon a change was made with the fielder. She was certainly more sensible. Just as soon as she was ready to let drive, she shut her eyes so tight as to loosen two of her puffs and pull out her back comb, and madly fired away. The ball flew directly at the batter, which so startled that lady, who had the bat clinched in both hands with desperate grip, that she involuntarily cried, "Oh, my!" and let it drop, and ran. This movement uncovered the catcher, who had both hands extended about three feet apart, in readiness for the catch, but being intently absorbed in studying the coil on the back of the batter's head, she was not able to recover in time, and the ball caught her in the bodice with sufficient force to deprive her of all her breath, which left her lips with ear-piercing shrillness. There was a lull in the proceedings for ten minutes, to enable the other members of the club to arrange their hair.

*The batter again took position, when one of the*

party, discovering that she was holding the bat very much as a woman carries a broom when she is after a cow in the garden, showed her that the tip must rest on the ground and at her side, with her body a trifle inclined in that direction. The suggester took the bat and showed just how it was done, and brought around the bat with such vehemence as to almost carry her from her feet, and to nearly brain the catcher. That party shivered, and moved back some fifteen feet.

The batter took her place, and laid the tip of the bat on the ground, and the pitcher shut her eyes again as tightly as before, and let drive. The fielder had taken the precaution to get back of a tree, or otherwise she must have been disfigured for life. The ball was recovered. The pitcher looked heated and vexed. She did n't throw it this time. She just gave it a pitching motion, but not letting go of it in time it went over her head, and caused her to sit down with considerable unexpectedness.

Thereupon she declared she would never throw another ball as long as she lived, and changed off with the catcher. This young lady was somewhat determined, which augured success. Then she looked in an altogether different direction from that to the batter.

And this did the business. The batter was ready. She had a tight hold on the bat. Just as soon as she saw the ball start, she made a tremendous lunge with the bat, let go of it, and turned

around in time to catch the ball in the small of her back, while the bat being on its own hook, and seeing a stone figure holding a vase of flowers, neatly clipped off its arm at the elbow and let the flowers to the ground.

There was a chorus of screams, and some confusion of skirts, and then the following dialogue took place :—

No. 1. "Let 's give up the nasty thing."

No. 2. "Let 's."

No. 3. "So I say."

No. 4. "It 's just horrid."

This being a majority, the adjournment was made.

The game was merely an experiment. And it is just as well it was. Had it been a real game, it is likely that some one would have been killed outright.

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### **MR. COBLEIGH GETS READY FOR A JOURNEY.**

MR. COBLEIGH was preparing to go away on the early train, Monday morning. Being of a nervous temperament himself, and somewhat crowded for time, shirt-buttons hugged close to the cloth, and button-holes appeared to be turned upside down. Just as he grasped his carpet-bag and was about to start, a strange cat made a dash

in through the door which Mrs. Cobleigh opened to see if the weather looked sufficiently threatening to make an umbrella necessary. The entrance of the cat was a great shock to both Mr. and Mrs. Cobleigh, as both despised cats. Mrs. Cobleigh screamed, "Scat!" but the animal misunderstood what she said, and instead of climbing over her and running outdoors, it started into the sitting-room. Mr. Cobleigh put after it at once. The cat dodged under the lounge, and Mr. Cobleigh had to shove the lounge around before he could dislodge it. Out from there it put for the front bedroom, the door to which being conveniently open. Mr. Cobleigh hastened after. All this time he retained his hold on the carpet-bag, and the spectacle of a man with a carpet-bag chasing a cat must have been an inspiring one to even so commonplace a woman as Mrs. Cobleigh, had not that lady been too excited to notice it. She had instinctively secured a broom, and had discreetly closed the outside door, and was now prepared to contribute materially to the exodus of the cat.

At the same time Mr. Cobleigh, with the carpet-bag well in hand, was following the cat amid the diversities of the front-bedroom furniture. And the carpet-bag proved a valuable aid. When the animal went under the bed, Mr. Cobleigh got down on his knees and shook the bag at her, and she departed for a chair. And then Mr. Cobleigh would throw the bag at the chair, and the cat would fly under the bed again, leaving

Mr. Cobleigh to pick up the bag himself, which he did. Then Mrs. Cobleigh got in with the broom, and both bag and broom were so effectual that the cat was only too glad to take refuge in the dining-room, and would have bolted outdoors with a heart full of gratitude, without doubt, had there been any means, but seeing none, it departed into the kitchen.

The remark that Mr. Cobleigh made on seeing that the door was closed we will not record. It was intended particularly for Mrs. Cobleigh's edification, and would lose its bloom if given to the public. The celerity with which she got the door open was most commendable.

But the cat was under the kitchen stove, and Mr. Cobleigh dashed in there, the trusty bag still in hand, and his whole appearance denoting that he was about to take a journey.

The stove was much lower than the bed, and in getting down so he could see under it, and present the bag to the attention of the cat, two suspender buttons on his best pants gave away, and Mr. Cobleigh was forced to stand ignominiously by and hold up the garment, while Mrs. Cobleigh started the cat with the broom.

The repressed wrath of this performance found expression in the appearance of the cat and its flight to the dining-room; and the exasperated man, darting in there in time to see the animal going through the door, impulsively shied the carpet-bag *after her*.

The bag missed the cat, but struck the floor of the stoop with such force, that, striking on one corner, it split apart, and Mr. Cobleigh was electrified beyond measure to see its contents shoot out into the street.

He then gave up all hopes of catching the train.

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#### NEW ENGLAND INQUISITIVENESS.

IT is remarkable, the amount of inquisitiveness a New-Englander develops in the course of his life. There is nothing awkward or constrained about it. It comes easily, naturally, and gracefully. In no part of New England is this trait so carefully cultivated as in our own dear Connecticut. Its fruits are shown in the record of the Patent Office. There are other fruits, however, not quite so happy, which never get inside of the Patent Office, and it is just as well they don't. Here is an instance in kind: A Danbury grocery firm have taken the agency for a hammock. One of the articles they have hung at the front in the shade of their porch. They hung it there as a sample and as an advertisement, but numerous people have got into it to see how it worked. It hung so low they could easily sit in it, and undoubtedly the motion was agreeable and comforting. But the grocers didn't fancy this per-

formance, especially as the hammock sitters were not hammock buyers. Saturday afternoon they removed the loop to one end from the hook, and fastened it by a bit of twine instead. Shortly after a man came in for two quarts of molasses. It was put up in his pail, and a paper tied over the top, as he had forgotten to bring a cover. When he passed out he saw the hammock. His curiosity was aroused at once. The grocers were busy inside, so he thought he would investigate on his own hook. With that keen intuition peculiar to a New England man, he saw at a glance that it was something to get into. He knew it was nothing to wear, and was equally sure it could not be arranged for cooking. He sat down in it. Then he swung backward and lifted his feet up. Then the twine fastening gave away. It was a dreadful affair. He had the pail of molasses sitting on his lap, and there was a dog sitting under the hammock. Neither the dog nor the molasses expected anything, any more than the man himself did. It was a terrible surprise to all of them. The man and the dog lost their presence of mind, and even the pail lost its head. The molasses went into his lap, and ran down his legs, and swashed up under his vest, and insinuated itself some way in between himself and his clothes. And when he went down he hit the dog with his heel on the back, and the dog was so wild with terror and amazement that it set up a head-splitting yell and fled madly down the street, having first taken

the precaution to bite him on the leg and to tip over a tier of wooden water-pails. When the pails went down a lot of hoes were carried over with them, and that started a box of garden seeds mounted on a box, and they in turn brought away a pile of peck measures whose summit was crowned with a pyramid of canned tomatoes. It was a dreadful shock to the man, and fairly paralyzed him with its magnitude; but when one article following another came avalanching atop of him, he thought the evil one himself had burst loose, and he just screamed as loud as he could. The molasses was all over him, and the garden seeds had adhered to the molasses, and he looked more like a huge gingerbread stuck full of caraways than anything else. In this awful condition he waddled home, and swore every step of the way.

There has never been anything like it in Danbury since the British burned the town.

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*A LATE FALL.*

It is a sad thing when the happiness of one becomes the misery of another. It is still sadder when the good and the beautiful are made instruments of torture. The mellow sunshine that lies upon all the earth, the balmy air laden with the scent of late flowers, and the hum of insect life,

are carrying misery into many hearts. To women this is a saddening autumn. Not since the original fall has there been a fall so disastrous to her as this fall. The sunlight, the warmth, the budding trees and flowering buds cast her down. She feels the days slipping noiselessly but swiftly by, and knows that soon, so soon, it will be too late.

It is house-cleaning season, but how little like, how unnatural it is. No leaden sky, no chilling air, no flying damp. There is no joy in having the stoves down, nor the carpets up. There is no happiness in having the windows out.

One cannot clean house without having it an open house from cellar to garret. And what comfort is there in having a house open, if no man is to be frozen stiff? Of what use is having the fires out, if no man is to be chilled to the marrow? What pleasure can there be in having a man shaking a carpet under a clear sky, or blacking a stove-pipe in balmy weather?

Pity your wife now. If ever she needs your sympathy, your patience, your forbearance, it is in this great calamity that has fallen upon her. Help her to look for the line storm. Get up before she does in the morning. Go outdoors and scrutinize the weather. If a cloud comes, if a damp air falls, go tell her. It will comfort her.

You have the excitement of business, the pleasurable society of the world, but it is little she has to entertain her and take her out of herself, and

the most of that is comprised in turning the house upside down during the chill days of the line storm.

She will get discouraged in this golden sunlight and mellow haze; but lift her up. It is your duty to do it. Tell her not to despair, that a line storm comes every fall, that it must come soon, that perhaps before another day has passed the air will be full of death's chill and death's damp, and every fire can be extinguished, every window be taken out, every carpet taken up, and every door left open.

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#### **THE NEIGHBORHOOD'S REMEDIES.**

We would not have people to be entirely indifferent to each other, but there is certainly an interest taken in each other's physical welfare that is frequently apprehensive. Perhaps the cause of this lies in the great excess of supply over demand in the matter of remedies, and there can be no change for the better until this condition is reversed.

Mr. Womsley, for instance, has a cold. It settles on his lungs or in his throat, and causes him to cough. So he coughs. He can't very well cough without some one hearing him. Some one hears him, and says, —

“Got a bad cold, eh? Should be taken care of

or there 'll be trouble. Let me tell you what to do."

The thing to do in this case is to take a strong draught of composition tea just before retiring, cover up warm, and in the morning the cold is gone. The advice is followed. However, the cold appears to be there just the same, as is evident from the cough.

He speaks of it to A. A asks him what he is taking. He tells him. A says,—

"Composition, granny! That stuff may be all well enough for a little cold, but for such a one as you 've got, you need something entirely different. What *you* want is a good square dose of Santa Cruz rum and molasses. If that don't fix you, nothing will."

Mr. Womsley takes a good square dose, and fortunately goes to bed on it. Otherwise there might have been trouble. He awakes the next morning so hoarse he can scarcely speak.

The next day the remedies increase. Mr. B's remedies have done remarkable cures that he personally knows of. Mr. C's came from an old Indian who gave it to one of his ancestors, and it had been handed down direct, without being tampered with. Mr. D's cured his aunt of consumption after a number of doctors had given her up. Mr. E's is something entirely new. He has been dosed to death himself by all kinds of stuff, and had lost all faith, and was n't going to try this, but was prevailed upon to do it.

and now he wouldn't be without it for the world, etc.

Thus Mr. Womsley is bombarded on the third day of his cold. Is it any wonder that he becomes sensitive on the subject? That his illness assumes a new phase of horror? That he shrinks from every medicine man and woman in the community? And that he uses all means in his power to smother the cough from the hearing of every one? These are not wonders, but it would be a very great wonder indeed if he did not descend to deceit and lie about his cough. Mr. Womsley believes he is justified in lying, and deliberately goes to work to do it.

Now who is to blame for this?

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#### **MASTER COVILLE AS CUPID.**

MR. COVILLE's niece, an estimable as well as a pretty young lady, has been visiting him for some time. Shortly after her coming, a clerk in one of Danbury's leading stores made her acquaintance, and became at once her devoted attendant, very much to the delight of young Coville. The clerk is very fond of good tobacco, and smokes an admirable cigar. The portion of it that is not consumed when he reaches the house, he leaves on the porch until he comes out again. The third

or fourth time he did this young Coville detected the move, and lost no time in possessing himself of the luxury, with which he retired to an out-of-the-way place. When this had been done several times, and several times the clerk had secretly felt for and missed his cigar, he began to grow suspicious and uneasy. Perceiving this, young Coville awoke to the fact that something must be speedily done to counteract the smoker's discretion, and the best way to do it was to so completely involve him in the meshes of love as to make the loss of an unfinished cigar a matter of no account whatever. With this view he put himself in the young man's way at the store. The bait took.

"How's Minnie?" asked the clerk, anxiously.

"She's not very well," said young Coville.

"Why, what's the matter?"

"I don't know. I guess you know that better 'n I do," answered the youth, with a facetious wink.

"I know?"

"I guess so. Oh, she's gone on you."

"Sh!" cautioned the clerk, looking around to see if they were unobserved. "What do you mean, Billy?" And he blushed and looked pleased.

"Why, you see, she's as chirk as can be when you're there, but when you ain't she's all down the mouth. She don't fix her hair, an' she won't see anybody, an' she goes around the house sighing, an' sets on a chair for an hour without sayin'

a blamed word to nobody, but just lookin' at the wall. Then there's another thing," added the young man, impressively, "she don't put cologne on her handkerchief, only when you're coming. Oh, I know a thing or two, you bet!" And he winked again.

To say that the clerk was too pleased and rejoiced for anything, is but feebly expressing the frame of his mind. In the excitement of emotion he gave young Coville a quarter. That diplomat hastened home and immediately sought his cousin.

"Minnie," he said, "I have been up to Charley's store."

"Have you?" she said, trying to look very much unconcerned.

"Yes, and I can tell you, Minnie, he's just a prime fellow, — way up. But he's gone on you."

"What do you mean, Willie?" asked the flushed and agitated girl.

"I mean just what I say. He's gone sure. He got me off in one corner, and he just pelted the questions into me about you. By gracious, Minnie, it's awful to see how he is gone on you. He wanted to know what you're doin', an' if you're enjoying yourself, an' if you're careful about your health. He'd better be looking for his own, I'm thinkin'."

The girl was pleased by these marks of devotion from the handsome clerk, but her heart failed her at the last observation. —

"Why, what do you mean, Willie?" she asked, in considerable apprehension.

"Oh, nothing, only if he keeps a-goin' down as he is of late, it won't be many months before he is salted down for good," said the young man, gloomily. "He told me that the things of this world wa'n't long for him."

And young Coville solemnly shook his head and withdrew to invest the quarter.

A great happiness has come upon Charley and Minnie now. Four times a week he visits her, and four times a week young Coville pensively sits back of the fence, smoking a cigar and speculating on the joyful future opening before his cousin and her lover.

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### THE INFLUENCE OF A CIRCUS.

THERE is nothing that takes a stronger hold upon the public heart than a circus. Can you explain it? What is there in the tinsel and sawdust and gaudy paint that penetrates to every heart in the community and draws it irresistibly out of the regular channels of life? What is it in these things that lays a hand of iron upon every branch of trade, and for twenty-four hours holds the industry of a town passive within its power? Can you tell this?

We laugh at people while we pity them for making such an ado over a circus. We relentlessly force our children off to school, and shut our heart stoutly against their every appeal for freedom. We can't abide the folly of this circus going. And then we sneak off to the line of procession (because we like to see what fools people will make of themselves), and if there is aught in the line that we do not take in we should very much like to be informed of it.

We like a circus, and we don't care to deny it either. We commence to think of it several days before it comes. We awake on that day full of excitable expectations. We wouldn't miss the procession for the price of a universe. We see beauty in the sawdust of the ring. We find glory in the dash of the performance. We are intoxicated with the lights, and the tinsel, and the sounds that come from every side.

Is n't this so with you?

Don't deny it. Be honest, and confess you were just as delirious as the rest of us. You may have been calm enough the night before. We don't say you were not. You laughed at the fools who talk of a circus. You lost patience with their zeal. You deplored the loss of time and money.

But the next morning! Didn't you know it was a circus morning before you heard a sound? Didn't your blood move more rapidly? Didn't you feel a sense of restlessness creeping over

you? Of course you did. There was circus in the air. The very atmosphere was full of its electricity, and you felt it, and passed under its spell, and could not fight it off.

And you saw that procession. If you didn't you carried on like a pirate, and could snap off the heads of the rest of the family for talking about it. You were right in the thickest of the crowd. You despised them for making such fools of themselves, of course. You got indignant because they jostled you, but you wouldn't have been jostled if you had been at your place of business, or down cellar sorting over seed potatoes, as the despiser of circuses always flatters himself that he will be on circus day. But then you had to go down town on an errand at the store, and you couldn't help it if the procession came along just then, and the crowd was so great that you couldn't get off the street until the procession was over. It is a little singular that you didn't think to go way to the rear of the store. You would have found room there, without doubt.

You didn't go to the circus, of course. But there was no harm in going up to the grounds and looking at the tent. Certainly not. Or going in and seeing the animals. Animals are harmless. Fine lessons may be learned in studying animals. After you saw the animals you came away. And when you came away, the masses came too.

Which is remarkable.

*They appear to have tired of the ring perform-*

ance at the very moment you finished studying the animals.

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### DO WE GROW TIRED OF FLOWERS?

"HAVE you noticed that you never grow tired of flowers?" asked a writer. Flowers are beautiful. Even the humble blossoms at the roadside are pretty. It rests one to look at flowers. They are loveliness perfected. There is no flaw in their beauty. In gracefulness, delicacy, coloring, fragrance, flowers are the masterpiece of Nature's handiwork. However plain may be the furnishing of a house, if it is provided with flowers it is an attractive spot. Flowers refine him who cultivates them, and gladden all who come in contact with them. They cost but little, yet how much they improve and beautify a place. And when they come in the springtime, after the frosts and snows, how they revive and delight the beholder. And to have them in the house through the winter, their bright colors and growing green in such contrast to the bleak outdoors, is a well-spring of joy.

And yet there is something very saddening about flowers. They deck the bride and smile amid the festivities of life, but they also cover the dead. Then they have to be got in in the fall. Women are more attached to flowers than are

men. To them the blossoms speak in a language we cannot comprehend. Between flowers and woman there is a mysterious sympathy. There is something very beautiful in this. To a woman a flower is symbolic of purity, tenderness, delicacy. To a man a flower is suggestive of papers, sheets, overcoats, and even bits of carpet. Men would love flowers more, would better appreciate their delightful lessons, if they did not have to get out at night and cover them up. It is a melancholy performance, covering up flowers to keep them from the frost. One has to take off his slippers and put on his boots to do it. He has to give up interesting reading to attend to it. Then it is very dark outdoors, and he steps into unlooked-for holes, and walks plump against unexpected objects. It is an operation that sorely tries his temper, because of the delays; the differences of opinion in regard to the plants which should be covered and the size of the article to be used in covering; the losing of pins, and the uncertainty of the extent of the work. No man knows, when he commences the task, the amount that is to be done, and it is this undecision and delay and changing about while the keen air cuts into his unprotected frame, that is worst of all. Sometimes he will get into the house four or five times under the impression that the work is done, only to be called out again to attend to a new plant, and to be reproached for his haste to shirk duty. The *seeds of long, and many times fatal, illness are*

sown on these occasions; for a man generally miscalculates the time required to cover a lot of plants, and, in the vexation that is upon him, hurries out doors in his shirt sleeves, and perhaps bareheaded. This is caused both by desperation and to make the work brief by creating the impression that he expects it to be so. If he went out comfortably bundled up, his wife would take that as an earnest invitation to keep him bobbing around in the dark and frosty air half the night, and would do it, without doubt. A man cannot be too circumspect on such an occasion.

There are many irritating variances of opinion in the matter of covering up flowers. There are plants of such a hardy nature as to need no covering during the first frosts of the season, but it pains us to say that a woman is not aware of it. Then a man and his wife differ as to the strength of the frost. He knows that if there is to be a frost at all, and its coming is very doubtful, it will be so light as to do no harm whatever. But she, on the contrary, declares that it will be so heavy as to kill every plant and seriously menace the fruit-trees. Her obstinacy causes much unhappiness.

Pretty soon the time comes for carrying in the plants. The operation is called carrying them in, but lugging is a much more pertinent term. Night is the popular time for doing it, because in the dark, and with his face full of foliage, the man who does the lugging knows no more where he is

going than if he were blindfolded in a strange cemetery, and is far more likely to crack his shins than to save them.

After a man has chilled his vitals in covering up plants, and strained his spine in lugging them into the house, it is very cheering to hear his wife declare that she is sick at heart of all the muss, and it is the last time she will ever bother with the plaguy things.

And he will hear it. It is just as certain as death.

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#### **THE POPULAR WAY OF BEGINNING THE YEAR.**

THERE is no day waited for with so much impatience as the 1st of January. The saint of New Year's day is a Russian. His name is Schwearoff. It is a day when most men throw aside their bad habits, sponge off the record of the past, and begin anew with clean page. As a people we are not so particular how we end, if the beginning is only right.

It is universally conceded that there is no use in trying to turn a new leaf at any other time than on the first day of the year. Other days have been tried, and after a fair and impartial trial have been found wanting. There is an indescribable *something in them* that prevents them from taking hold.

and so, one by one, they have been dropped in favor of the first day of January. This is the day that takes hold above all other days. It is chiefly esteemed for its grip.

So everybody waits for the first day of January to put his best foot forward. And for one day in the year the world is almost perfect.

The man who smokes waits for that day to abjure smoking forever. He might take the vow on some other day, but he is in earnest and must wait till then, or he would not be able to "hold out." He realizes the power the habit has had over him, and how seriously it is hurting him, and is determined to shake it off. He waits impatiently for the first day of the new year, and smokes to calm his impatience.

The man who chews waits for that day. Chewing is a vile habit, and should be abandoned. Nobody understands this more clearly than he. The 1st of January will fix it. He will break off then as clean as a whistle. It is such a nasty, dirty habit that it should be broken off for good; so he keeps on in the filth until the New-Year day, that he may have all the advantage of that occasion.

The man who drinks waits for it. Liquor is hurting him. He feels it every day. It is not only injuring him physically, but mentally also; and it hurts his business, and makes his folks unhappy. Besides, drinking is setting a very bad example for those about him. He must give it

up. It is wrong to indulge the habit. He is very anxious for the 1st of January to come, so he can stop the wrong.

The night of the 31st of December is a great event in the lives of these men. They wait impatiently until twelve o'clock. It would n't do to stop smoking, chewing, or drinking a minute before that hour. At twelve o'clock the last cigar is put out, the last chew thrown away, the last drink is swallowed.

What an inspiring spectacle is this! How solemn! How sublime! How majestic is the strength of man, when his will is aroused! What a grandeur there is in this sacrifice of self upon the altar of duty!

It is said that the good once understood will always be followed; and it is so. These men once having tasted the joys of release from a vicious habit will never again lose the opportunity for swearing off. They will swear off on the first day of every year, as long as they live.

The first day of January is conspicuous in another way. It is the day when diaries are commenced. You rarely hear of any one commencing a diary at any other time of the year. Such a one would not be orthodox, and it would not, probably, be kept two weeks. Most people begin to keep a daily record of events on the first day of the year, and so diaries are to be found in nearly all households. They are excellent things to have. They are *good in after years* to paste poetry and recipes in.

The trouble with diaries is that they are too large, altogether too large. Manufacturers try to crowd too much in them. They persist in putting in all of the months. The model diary that is yet in the far future will never go beyond the month of January.

And many of them will be kept faithfully.

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#### **A COUNTRY VILLAGE ON THE FOURTH OF JULY.**

THERE are two conspicuous features which go to distinguish the glorious anniversary of our national independence from any other holiday, and these are the presence of noise and the absence of cats. The noise commences when the boys wake up. The cats commence when *they* wake up. We don't know where the cats go. We only know they go. Sometimes we have thought they may dissolve in the air, and ascend into space until the racket is over. But this is merely a speculation. Dogs are unlike cats. Dogs are more like women; trusting, confiding, and hoping for the best. So dogs stay around to see what 's going on. Quite frequently they find out.

The Fourth of July was not made for the boys, but they have got hold of it. It is a boy's day as

completely and thoroughly as if they had been measured for it. No man thinks of the day in its true significance. If he ponders on and speaks of the heroism, the devotion, the glory of the men of '76, he is a drinking man, and will be as drunk as a fiddler within an hour, if not already there. No man cares aught for the day, unless he keeps a saloon or makes ice-cream or sells fire-works. If he does n't go on a picnic, he stays home and hoes his garden.

It is the boy who meets and escorts in the day, who waits upon it while it stays, and sees it off at the last. As long as there are boys there will be a glorious anniversary of our national independence. When they play out, it will play out. There is nothing a man forgets so easily and completely as that he was once a boy. The man who is awaked out of a sound sleep at dawn of the Fourth, and swears at the noise, who is startled by an unexpected cracker, or deafened by an unexpected cannon, and calls the whole thing a piece of condemned foolishness that ought to be swept from the face of the earth, was once a boy himself, and the noisiest, the earliest, the latest, and the most infernal of all the boys in his gang. But you would n't think so, to hear him fume and fret and scold now.

It would be amusing if it were not so painful to hear parents advise the boys to go to bed early, on the night of the third, so to get rested by a *good sleep*.

Sleep! What an insane idea! Sleep on the night of the third! Are parents mad?

Does a man want to trade off a leg of flesh for one of wood? Does a cockroach ask for a paper of carpet-tacks? Does an oyster yearn for a porous plaster? Then why should a boy want sleep on the night before the Fourth? What he wants is powder to explode, windows to rattle, and an aged lady in the neighborhood to faint dead away. If he should want anything else he will mention it. If you would have him perfectly happy on this day of all days ask him not to sleep, ask him not to wash himself.

There are two seasons of the day when, by their livid contrast to each other, they form epochs. One of these is at 10 A. M., the other is at 3 P. M.

Danbury at 10 A. M. presented a remarkably lively appearance. Many of the stores were closed, but this was not noticeable in the life and animation everywhere about. The main street was full of people. Teams were running to and fro. Boys were busy comparing notes, laying in further supplies, and firing off those already on hand. Folks after cream and lemons, women in white, men with baskets on picnics bent, were hurrying here and there, and the scene they made was a lively one indeed.

At 3 P. M. a radical change had swept over the village. Both nature and humanity were exhausted, and Danbury lay pulseless in the glare of the sun. The main street was comparatively

deserted; the private streets were entirely so. Here and there an irrepressible boy let off a cracker or a little cannon, but these sounds, by their rarity and brevity, only made the silence the more oppressive. A wandering man, appearing as if he had just been shoved out of a graveyard, was to be seen moving aimlessly about. The stone flags and gutters were full of *débris* of the burnt crackers, fruit leavings, peanut shells, and cigar stumps. The sun poured straight down in a blinding glare of heat upon blistering stones, gray dust of roads, and yellow gravel of walks.

The town was like a man who had been kicking up Old Ned to his heart's content, and had now laid down, and did n't want anybody to touch him.

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#### MR. COBLEIGH'S DESCENT.

MRS. COBLEIGH had been scrubbing the oil-cloth under the kitchen stove. Mr. Cobleigh stood by the stove putting on a clean shirt. At this juncture, at the most painful juncture possible,—as Mr. Cobleigh had his head entirely obscured in the garment,—a neighboring woman came upon the back stoop and knocked at the door. It was quite a start to Mr. Cobleigh. He pulled away at the robe to relieve his eyes, and at the same time made a *plunge* for escape. It was a violent plunge.

He put all the strength of his physical resources into this leap. He didn't strike against the stove or plunge over a chair. He simply landed with the flying foot upon the piece of soap with which Mrs. Cobleigh had been cleaning the cloth. For a single instant Mr. Cobleigh's body paused, an instant of terrific suspense, and then the soap started off, and Mr. Cobleigh came down upon the floor with a shock that knocked the neighboring woman from the stoop and caused Mrs. Cobleigh to sink unconscious where she stood,—a shock that made every plate upon the pantry shelf dance and jingle, and set the knives and forks within their resting-place to leaping over each other,—a shock that caused the heavy kitchen table to rear up on one leg as if in the delirium of a drunk, and made two vases sharing a mantel on the upper floor to nod threateningly at each other across the space that divided them.

It was a terrific fall. Every timber in the building felt it, and shivered as it came. Even the foundation-stones moved, and the tremor passed from them to adjoining shrubs, and set their tops to shaking as if a wind were passing over them, while the sash within the windows shook and rattled to such a degree as to threaten their complete dislodgment.

It seemed as if every flying bird and whispering wind and nodding leaf knew that Mr. Cobleigh had fallen, and was appalled thereby.

In the mean time the neighboring woman

recovered herself and sallied home straightway. Mr. Cobleigh clawed his way out of the folds of the shirt and limped off to bed; and Mrs. Cobleigh, coming back to consciousness, immediately proceeded to hunt up the soap.

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*AN EXTRAORDINARY AFFAIR.*

IT certainly was a most extraordinary affair, and the parties interested will remember it as long as they live. The young lady was shopping in the evening. On her way home she was overtaken by a young man, an acquaintance, who asked the pleasure of escorting her home. The offer was accepted, and the two proceeded, he carrying her bundles, and making himself generally agreeable, as is the custom in such cases. Arriving at her home, she took him direct into the sitting-room, as the parlor stove was not yet up. The father and mother were sitting there, enjoying, evidently, the genial warmth of the fire. On the entrance the young man noticed that the mother blushed deeply, and at the same time her husband laughed outright. It was a most boisterous laugh, without evident premeditation, and appeared to owe its origin to no assignable cause. The laugher gave no explanation after the explosion, but continued to look very much amused, while the color in his

wife's face deepened. To the young man this was a most embarrassing reception. Naturally enough he felt that it was something in his appearance that excited the mirth of the one and caused the blushes of the other. Involuntarily he took a hasty survey of his appearance as far as the circumstances would allow, but could perceive nothing therein calculated to upset the risibilities of any man or unduly agitate the bosom of any woman. Still he was not at his ease, and the young lady discerning it, and failing to understand the action of her parents, proposed euchre as an offset. So the two played, and the old gentleman continued to look amused, occasionally varying this accomplishment by facetious winks at his wife, whose countenance was alternately red and white. The young man became so absorbed in the game that he forgot the peculiarity of his reception, and the young lady, dividing her attention between the cards and his face, lost sight of the trouble. And so they played and played, while the silence of the parents grew really oppressive, had the players but have known it. But they made no note of it. They played on, and all interests were swallowed up in the game. An hour passed, and then a half-hour more. It was now ten o'clock. As the hour struck the old gentleman looked up from his paper in which he had been absorbed for some little time, glanced at the players, then upon the face of his wife, and immediately went off into such a fit of suppressed laughter that the

effort to control it very nearly precipitated him into a case of apoplexy. Fortunately, or rather unfortunately, the players did not notice this agitation. Had they looked up they could not have failed to have noted the terribly distressed expression of the mother's face, in which case the young man would have understood that some family misfortune made the presence of an outsider very unpleasant. A half-hour more passed. The young man then threw down the cards and said he must go. The young lady, having thoroughly enjoyed the game, felt impelled to say to him, "Don't be in a hurry, it is early yet"; and had almost uttered the fatal words, when her glance encountered the stony expression upon her mother's face, and the words died upon her lips, while a thrill of fear shot through her heart. The young man took his hat, turned to bid the family a pleasant good-night, when his gaze fell upon the face of the mother, and the same thrill pierced his heart. He withdrew without a word, using all the haste possible, and went up the street to his home in a dazed state of mind.

He learned accidentally, a few days later, the cause of it all. The old lady, having a severe cold, had taken precaution to soak her feet in hot water before retiring, and her feet were in the pail receiving the proper treatment when the young man was unexpectedly ushered in. As her skirts fell over the vessel, he failed to note the *fact*, and consequently prolonged his stay two

solid hours. What the temperature of the water had become at that hour can easily be imagined, but what were the thoughts that passed through the miserable woman's distracted mind during those two hours no one can fathom. Even she finds herself unable to clearly define them, although she has talked of but little else since the awful night.

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#### MR. COBLEIGH'S HOE.

TRAMPS calling at the Cobleigh mansion have received something to eat, if there was anything to give them. Mrs. Cobleigh's mother is visiting her son-in-law. When she discovered that tramps called and were fed, she protested against the extravagance.

"Why," said she, with a pitying laugh, "I should no more think of feeding tramps for nothing than of feeding an army for nothing. The good-for-nothing lazy things, they can work just as well as you can work. They'd never get anything out of me without doing something for it, I can tell you that."

"Oh, that's well enough in theory," observed the soft-hearted Cobleigh, "but it is too troublesome to reduce to practice. It is only a bite we can give 'em any way, and that's not enough to fool around about."

"That's the way with all men," retorted his wife's mother, somewhat impatiently. "Anything to save trouble is their motto, it matters not what is the cost. But I don't believe that way. I believe that every penny counts, and that if you get a little something in the way of work out of these vagabonds, it is so much gain for yourself, besides discouraging idleness and vagabondism. Now I'll take the next tramp in hand, and you'll see the effect."

Mrs. Cobleigh's mother was as good as her word. The next tramp who came along was a great hulk of a fellow, in quest of victuals. The old lady had found out in the mean time that the front walk needed cleaning, and she told him if he would work there an hour she would give him something to eat. He assented, and she armed him with a hoe.

She was very much pleased with the success of her plan, and said to her daughter, in an exulting tone, "*There, what I did tell you?*"

At the end of half an hour she went to the front to see that he was not fooling away the time, and found that he was not. In fact, he had made the very best use of the time, and was nowhere in sight. The old lady hastened to the walk and looked anxiously up and down the street, but the tramp was nowhere to be seen.

This made her very sick.

Then she remembered that the hoe was a new one, and the sickness increased.

Every few minutes she would go to the door and cast an anxious glance to the walk, but the object of her longing did not darken its surface.

Such a terribly discouraged old lady has not been seen in Danbury in some time, nor one so prone to rubbing her head and silent meditation.

Mr. Cobleigh has got another hoe, which he has chained to a post in the cellar,—a precaution scarcely necessary.

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*A MEMORY.*

IT is evident that mops have seen their best days. Mops, like many other dear and familiar objects, have had their vicissitudes, and succumbed to them. The genius of man, when first devoted to mops, was employed exclusively on the handle and fixture. It was some years before it struck the mop itself, and shortly after mop-sticks, which had always stood in bundles in front of the hardware stores, now appeared in barrels with their frowsy heads of cotton-waste thrust heavenward. But the advance of the age in the improvement of machinery has told on the mops. Carpets and oil-cloth, which once were confined to the parlor and sitting-room, have been so cheapened by the process of manufacture, that even families in very moderate circumstances can afford to

spread them on about every floor in the house. Then again, this very desire to save the cost of labor has led to a tendency to save labor itself, and sweeping is found to be much easier than washing. Consequently, mops of even the most improved kind are rare, while the mop of our mothers is almost, if not entirely, obsolete. This familiar, useful, and extremely popular article in its time, was composed of various articles of cast-off wearing apparel. It might be a portion of a petticoat, a pantaloons leg, a coat tail, or a vest-front. The latter named was a prominent ingredient. That was the time when protuberant brass buttons were in vogue, and it would once in a while happen that in making up the mop one or two of these buttons would be left on the vest, an omission rarely discovered until some offending masculine found it out himself, by a manifestation altogether too clear to be disputed.

As a weapon, the mop of our mothers was very filling. When a man received a "lick" across the face from it, he felt somewhat as if he had been struck by a torpedo loaded with mud. With the decline of the mop came the rise of the divorce court.

### **AN INTERESTING STUDY.**

WE never knew there was anything particularly interesting about salve until last Saturday, when we were being shaved. The salve which we then noticed was embalmed in a roll of muslin on the little finger of the left hand of our barber. Perhaps there is no place where a salve, about to introduce itself to one's closest attention, can better secure that object than on the little finger of the left hand of one's barber. Even we ourselves were surprised at the amount of interest we took in the matter. It was simply extraordinary. We didn't think it possible that a small spoonful of salve would so engross one in these days of striking and wonderful performances. We didn't learn what was the trouble with his finger. We might have found out by asking, but it was not a time for conversation. We left the imagination to toy with this subject. There was no opportunity to observe the color of the salve, as the rag hid that, but the color did not interest us. No, it was not the color. But the color of the rag was evident enough at a glance. It might be described as a three-days'-old tint. The rag was fastened by thread. One end of the thread dangled to the length of about two inches. When the invalid finger was elevated to within that height, the thread playfully trolled our nose. This tickled

that organ amazingly. Then the afflicted finger would descend until it displaced the thread with itself, and this would immediately knock endways all the hilarity created by the titillation of the thread, — thus alternating between the hill-tops of delight and the valleys of gloom. The usual twenty minutes seemed to extend into hours, and a feature of *materia medica* that never before attracted our least attention was now and forever firmly planted on an orchestral chair in the inner temple of our very existence.

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#### COMMEMORATING OUR NATIONALITY.

THE Southerners, who make a quiet festival of the Fourth of July, and shoot off fire-works at Christmas, are a trifle more sensible than we. Still, the most of us believe we celebrate in a very happy way, until, at least, the day is done. It appears that the general idea in the North of an appropriate observance of the natal anniversary is to dress up, make a noise, or get drunk. The man who does n't get drunk or make a noise goes on a picnic. Once in a while he stays home, darkens the best ventilated room, disrobes to his gauze under-clothing, and smokes away the day. *When he does this he is a god on a solid gold ped-*

estal. The four prominent ingredients of a popular Fourth are Starch, Ice-cream, Gin, and Powder. The starch leads off. Between the hours of eight and ten A. M., the starched linen of the men and the starched skirts of the women are seen on their way to the picnic ground. To the lightly attired man on the inside of the window-blind it is a cheerful and hopeful spectacle. The flushed and expectant faces, the quick step, the rustle of the starched goods, blend happily together. There is so much promise of a good time, so much suggestive of portentous events in their appearance, as to make the observation of them an interesting study. Their coming back at night is a contrast of appalling magnitude. The starch has gone, the enthusiasm has oozed out, children that had to be repressed at morn now have to be stimulated to get them ahead; dissatisfaction, weariness, and disgust predominate. The anxiety to get away is replaced by an anxiety to get back. Their appearance is so depressing as to cause the observer to doubt if there ever had been a morning to this day. It is noticeable on the Fourth of July that the size of one's family, and the youthfulness of the members, determine the distance of the picnic. A man with no children stays at home; with one or two children he goes to a neighboring grove; with five children he goes off on the cars; with more than that number he includes a steamboat trip with the railway excursion. The amount of ice-cream, root beer, soda-water, and lemonade

disposed of by a temperance family on the Fourth of July is wonderful. The country itself was not in near so frightful a condition on the first Fourth as the American temperance stomach was on the last.

Early in the dawn of the day following the intemperate man is looking for an eye-opener, and the temperate man is on a dead run for a doctor

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*A GREAT SHOCK.*

WHEN the news of the "Adelphi's" explosion reached Danbury, a citizen, whose wife started for New York that morning by way of the boat, took the first train for Norwalk. He was very much excited, and full of the direst apprehension. The picture of the mutilated and lifeless body of his wife was burned upon his heart and brain. They had never, at the best, been a very loving couple, but they were eminently respectable. In fact, so respectable, that neither had seen fit to give up to the other except in cases where it was absolutely necessary. He had pursued his way, and she had gone hers, each finding pleasure in characteristic channels. But now, with the presence of her death upon him, the old tenderness with which he had won her came back to him, and during that long and dreary ride to the seaside his

thoughts were busy with the past. He could recall with painful distinctness every help he had refused her, every cross word he had given her, every coldness he had shown her. All the little acts governed by petty selfishness, of which he had been guilty, and which had passed from his memory in the doing, now rose up before him, as deeds of monstrosity in whose presence his heart shrank tremblingly away.

His mind was torn by these agonizing reflections. He cursed the day he had ever been to her aught but a keenly sympathizing husband. Her own faults were lost sight of in the horror of her tragic fate, and he could only see his own offending. And so the moments dragged along, each one taking him nearer to the dread possibility, and each one increasing the anguish of his heart.

At last the train reached Norwalk. He hurried out on his wretched search, asking here and there for intelligence of her, his white lips and trembling frame testifying most eloquently to his anxiety. At last his search was rewarded, and he found her; not dead and mutilated, but alive and unharmed.

It was a happy meeting,—not demonstrative, because both were sorely out of practice in that, but he was relieved of a terrible weight on finding her as he did.

“So you are all right?” he said.

“Yes,” she answered, “I ain’t hurt a bit, but I was terribly frightened.”

"You must have been,—horribly so. It was a terribly narrow escape. Where's your satchel?"

"I don't know. I think it must have blown overboard."

"Did n't you have it with you?"

"No, I left it on a bench, and had gone to the front of the boat to look out on the water when the explosion came."

"That was dreadfully careless. I don't see what you could have been thinking of to have gone off and left your satchel like that."

"Why, I never had a thought the boat was going to blow up, did I?"

"It don't make any difference," he persisted. "Some one would have stolen it, as likely as not, if the boat hadn't blown up. There is no sense in it anyway, and it was a foolish thing to do. I don't suppose there's any use to go looking for it now."

"I know there ain't," she answered, "because I was sitting right where the boat blowed out, because it was warm there."

"Well, it can't be helped, I suppose, but it is too bad. The next time you go away you'll show more sense, I hope, than to go gallivanting all over a boat without your satchel."

## AN HEIRLOOM.

WHEN you were a boy there was a dust brush in common use which is now rarely seen. It was a long brush, one third handle, and the bristle spread out from the back, which was rounding. Mr. Cobleigh's wife's mother has one of these brushes. She was visiting the Cobleighs last week, and she brought it with her to give to her daughter. She told Cobleigh that that brush had been in her family forty years, and was now about as good as new, as Mr. Cobleigh could see by looking at it. Its excellent condition was jointly due to her care and to that honesty in manufacture which so eminently prevailed when our parents were young. The old lady said that that brush would now outwear four of the new-fangled brushes, and do the work more thoroughly. Mr. Cobleigh obligingly conceded all this, and tried to look agreeable, but there was a gloomy expression which he could not shake off, and which he could not, to save his life, define. That evening Mr. Cobleigh was descending the cellar stairs with a lamp in one hand and a pitcher in the other, when he unexpectedly stepped on the back of this brush, which turning over, as this kind of brush always does, he was escorted into the cellar with appalling celerity. The lamp being extinguished by the shock, Mr. Cobleigh was obliged to pass

headlong over two barrels and a box in the darkness, but succeeded as well in doing it, and in getting his head and nearly half his body through a step-ladder, as if he had been operating in the glare of a calcium light. For a moment he lay in the warm embrace of the step-ladder, as if in a trance, and in that time his wife and her mother were brought to the scene by the crash.

What Mrs. Cobleigh said was,—

“My goodness! have you hurt you?”

What her mother said was,—

“How did you come to do it?”

What Mr. Cobleigh himself said is hardly proper to print.

He marched up stairs with the step-ladder on him, as it was utterly impossible for the women to free him from it, and it required the efforts of two strong men and a hammer to get the twain apart. It was long toward morning before Mr. Cobleigh spoke again, and then he said to the doctor,—

“When I first saw that brush I felt a dreadful sick feeling go all over me. Fool that I was, not to remember the devilish nature of that kind of brush!”

Mrs. Cobleigh’s mother has gone back home and taken the precious heirloom with her.

## A REJECTED LOVER'S FEARFUL REVENGE.

IN spite of all that has been done in the last fifty years to improving the channel, the course of true love is still uncertain in places. An incident indicative of this, although somewhat out of the usual line, occurred in Danbury recently. There were two suitors for a young woman's affections. No. 1 was first acquainted with her, and had kept pretty steady company with her through the past month, when No. 2 appeared. The latter very soon got the best hold, and this became apparent to the former. The young lady gave herself up to No. 1, until the day after the Fourth, when she suddenly and rather decidedly veered about to the stranger, who is new in town, learning the jewelry business. No. 1 was forgotten as easily, apparently, as if he had been an old debt. It was the night of the fifth that this change in feeling dawned upon him. He had purchased a quart of new apples, and taken them to her house. There was company present on his arrival, and he requested to see her privately in the hall. She complied with a reluctance that struck him as being singular.

"Here is something for you, Julia," he whispered, extending the package.

She colored slightly, as she said, —

"I cannot take it, thank you."

"But you don't know what it is," he urged. "It is a quart of new apples, just come in market."

She made no move.

"Why, Julia, take them. They won't hurt you. They are ripe."

"No, I must n't," she persisted, keeping her eyes cast down.

"Why not?" he pleaded. "You don't think I'd bring 'em up here if I thought they would hurt you, do you?"

She moved uneasily, but said nothing.

"Julia," he began, in a broken voice, "don't you believe me when I tell you they are ripe?"

She did not answer.

"Can it be possible," he continued, in a voice of pain, "that you believe that I would try to make you sick? that I'd bring anything up here that would upset you?"

"The company are waiting, and I must go back to them," she said, speaking in a constrained tone, and reaching out to the handle of the parlor door.

"You won't take them?" He was very white, and his voice trembled with suppressed passion.

"No."

"Then I'll go home and eat every goldarned one of 'em before I touch my bed, if they kill me deader than Goliar." And with this ferocious threat he bounced out of the house.

Whether he did as he promised is not known, but as he was around on the street the next day,

it is more than likely that wiser thoughts prevailed.

That afternoon he started for her house, to see if the dreadful thing was true that that jeweller, whom he designated by the prefix of "pole-legs," had really supplanted him. As he neared the house he saw, with anger, that the jeweller was there, playing croquet with Julia. The sight maddened him. For a moment he looked at them with clinched hands, then he hurried away with a gleam in his eye that denoted a storm. In a quarter of an hour he was again approaching the place. He had both hands in the pockets of his sack, as if he was holding on to something valuable. The dapper young jeweller was still engaged in the game with the fair young Julia, and their laughing remarks grated distastefully upon his ear. He marched straight in to the yard. Julia looked up and saw him, and a frown covered her face. He saw it, and understood its import at once. His own face grew black with wrath. He turned to her.

"Julia, have you given me up for this cuss?" he savagely inquired.

"What do you mean by such language as that?" she angrily demanded. While the party thus indelicately indicated stared at the newcomer as if he very much doubted his own existence.

"Just what I say," retorted the discarded one.

"Well, the quicker you leave this yard the

better you 'll please me," was the spiteful rejoinder from the fair one.

"Then it 's true, it 's true," he howled, in a voice of anguish. "She has left me for old pole-legs. Oh!" This with a sudden reversal of tone, as the name brought up a realization of the hated presence. "You are the one that 's done it, are you?" Turning in a rage upon his rival. "You are the scoundrel that left me to buy her things for a whole month, to get her sweetened up for *you*, and then you come in an' take her to yourself. Where were you on the Fourth?" he screamed with biting sarcasm. "Why did n't you show yourself when there was money to spend, an' things to show her that cost cash down. Where were you when the ice-cream an' cake was around? Oh, you old gimlet eye!" he added, suddenly removing one hand from the recesses of a pocket and hurling a raw egg full in the face of his rival, which, breaking in the contact, completely transformed the entire expression of the jeweller. "Where were you? I say," he yelled, dancing around and drawing forth another egg. At the advent of this awful article, Miss Julia scampered into the house, and the affrighted and almost blinded rival struck out wildly for escape; but the foe was after him, and not ten feet had been cleared when the second egg caught him between the shoulders, and sprinkled its glowing color over his back. The unfortunate man ran with all *his might* seeking for escape, but baffled in the

search. He flew over the vegetables, and darted around the trees, but the avenger kept close to him, plastering him with omelets, and plying him with questions like this:—

“Where were you on the Fourth?”

Egg.

“Where were you when there was money to be spent?”

Egg.

“Kept away, did you, till the Fourth was over, the costliest day in the year?”

Egg.

“Knew cream was up that day, did you?”

Egg.

And the eggs flew with all the vengeance an unrequited affection could impart to them. And the unhappy Julia, standing in a trance of horror at the window, saw her favored one pelted in the back, in the side, on the head, and against the legs; saw him tear through the shrubbery like a winged omelet; saw the golden liquid stream from his hair, his chin, his coat-tails, and his finger-tips; saw him shed scrambled eggs, chromos, and circus posters at every jump; saw him finally bound over the back fence, and sweep across the back lots like a simoon of biliaryness, and then she gave a scream and fainted dead away.

## BRIGHT TRADE PROSPECTS.

HE is a small man, rather dapper in appearance, with a propitiary air in his clothes, in his face, and even in the fringe of hair which encircles his head without covering it. His wife is a large woman, of course, with a red face and an aggressive air. He went out to the vegetable pedler this morning, with a large tin pan, to make purchases. It was the first time the pedler had seen him come to trade. There were several women, neighbors, at the wagon. He came up to the cart, and looked critically over the array of fruits and vegetables.

"How much are those cucumbers?" he asked.

"Five cents."

He lifted one of them, said they were fine-looking, and then asked,—

"How much is that lettuce a head?"

"Ten cents."

"That is cheap enough. And now let me see," he said, slowly. "Ah, there's watermelons, eh? Why, they are early enough, I'm sure. How much are they?"

"Seventy-five cents apiece," said the dealer, who, seeing that his customer was no ordinary party, began to stir himself about. "They are fresh melons, just got them last night, and every one of them is fully ripe. I'll guarantee that."

"Fully ripe, eh?" said the customer, fondling the article.

"Yes, sir," said the dealer, getting up on his feet, in the flush of expectation.

"They look ripe," coincided the customer. Then he looked around and spied another attractive article.

"Peaches, eh? Well, I declare! How natural and good they look. How much for the peaches?

"Thirty cents a quart," said the dealer, mentally figuring up the total of half a dozen cucumbers, a couple of heads of lettuce, a watermelon, and a quart of peaches, while the women at the cart opened their eyes in wonder, and stood silently by, awed by the magnitude of the transaction.

"Only thirty cents," mused he. "Why, that's reasonable enough, I take it, in these times. Let me see,—five cents a piece for the cucumbers, ten cents for the lettuce, seventy-five cents for a watermelon, thirty cents for—"

"Joseph Malachia!" came a sharp, loud voice, through a spitefully opened door, "are you going to get what I sent you after, or are you going to stand out there all day?"

"Gimme ten cents' worth new potatoes," gasped the man, nervously opening the hand he had kept shut, and disclosing a new dime. "Quick, please!"

## THE MONTH OF ROSES.

JUNE is the month of love, joy, and August that of its agony. In June two hearts knit together and become one. In August two bodies separate. She goes away to see her mother's aunt in the country, and he stays at home, working the treadmill of duty. This comes hard on all men, but its weight is the heaviest on the grocery clerk. His heart is not in his work. How can it be? Where the treasure is there will the heart be also, and his treasure is far away. He cannot smile on the customer. He cannot counterfeit successfully that expression of all-absorbing interest which makes a clerkship a thing of beauty. Certainly his is a most critical task. The variety and diversity of the articles in which he deals require that he should keep his wits about him. In this particular he is in almost as much danger as the drug clerk, while the opportunities for slipping are a hundred-fold. A Danbury man who went to a drug store to have a prescription prepared, seeing nobody but a clerk present, said, —

“Young man, are you keeping company with a girl?”

“Yes, sir,” answered the clerk, with a blush.

“Do you think the world of her?”

“I do,” said the clerk, firmly, although blushing *considerably*.

"Is she in town?" pursued the customer anxiously.

"No, sir, she is away on a visit."

"That will do," said the man, decisively. "You can't fool around any prescription for me." And he went away.

But it is the grocery clerk who has to struggle from early morn till late at night with a flood of annoyances. When he dips into the sugar barrel he thinks of her lips, and sighs; in cutting the cheese he is reminded of the strength of his devotion to her; and when he looks into the butter firkin his thoughts stray to her hair. When he would go away by himself and give expression to his emotions, he is obliged to help lift a barrel of corned beef, or roll a cask of salt, or open a case of lard. It is only when he is dealing out mackerel that he feels as if he had a companion in his sorrow, a sympathizer in grief. There is that softened, subdued light in the eye of a salt mackerel which touches a responsive chord in the heart of suffering, and awakens it to plaintive melody. How tenderly he lifts it from the kit, how lovingly he lingers in wrapping it up. Poor fellow! He may put up washing starch for baking powder, draw molasses in the kerosene can, and even attempt to palm off various things for tea. He may do this. It is more than likely that he will. But the expression of a mackerel's eye will not change. The softened, subdued light of sympathy still remains.

## TWO SCENES.

AN ORDINARY SCENE.—A chill strikes him as soon as he enters the yard. There are two lengths of stove-pipe and a roll of oil-cloth on the side stoop. He takes hold of the door to open it, when he finds it resists his act, and, peering through the sash, he sees there is a pile of carpet against it. By steady pushing he moves the mass sufficiently to permit of his squeezing his body through. The noise brings his wife to the scene. She appears in a dress that he had fondly hoped was, ere this, in the carpet rags. It is limpy, and wet, and torn, and bedraggled. The sleeves are rolled up, exposing a pair of very red arms vividly suggestive of suds and steam and general wetness. There is a cloth tied about her head, and soot on the face, but nothing in the countenance indicative of love, sweetness, or dinner. She having inquired what on earth made him come home so early, and he having replied that he supposed she expected he could live forever without eating, the conversation is dropped, and she returns to the preparation of his dinner, and he looks around. Every step is on a bare floor, and gives forth a gloomy reverberation. The dining-room floor is damp. The table is buried from sight in a mass of knick-knacks and dishes. He passes into the *parlor*. *Everything* is gone from it, excepting a

pail of suds and a woman who looks as if she had just been wrung from it. The windows are open, and the air is cold and wet. He falls back from there with a shiver, taking time to note with surprise the discolored condition of the walls, and seeks the bedroom for refuge and a wash, but pauses, when inside the door, in dumb amazement, not unmixed with dismay. Seven chairs, mysteriously stacked, bar his way effectually to the washstand. There is the bed, with a picture of Washington laying on his patriotic back, with the family Bible, a saucer of tacks, and a hammer on his stomach, while from amid a collection of books, frames, vases, ornaments, casters, and old papers, his eyes peer upward in helpless astonishment. Then there is the bureau, with its top clear of comb or brush, and the mirror coated with dust. To cap all, the window is open, and the damp, chill air of the season floats in and sets off the general desolation to the best advantage. The miserable man backs away and seeks shelter in the kitchen, where the stove sends up a cloud of steam, and watches his wife as she slices his bread and meat, fills the dipper half full of cold water, slaps a hunk of butter on a cracker—improvised into a plate—and sets the whole on the bread-board over the sink, and tells him to swallow it down as quick as possible, as there are carpets to beat, pipe to clean, a bureau to move, and a stove to set up, before he goes back. Buoyed up by this prospect, he braces up in front of the repast,

and proceeds to worry it down, feeling that every mouthful has an escort of steam and soap. However wretched may look the woman who is grumbling, and brushing, and slapping all around him, she is dressed appropriately, and consequently is neatly adjusted to the situation, while he, on the contrary, is an incongruous element in the scene. He feels this as he looks over his neat dress and around the disordered room, and his clothes, in their order, appear to rise up in noisy rebuke to the chaos about him. He feels as if he was in active but helpless rebellion against his surroundings, and this causes him to grow more submissive as the meal advances, and to swallow every mouthful with a sort of apologetic gulp, and an air of general propitiation.

And yet it is in the springtime, with long imprisoned nature leaping forth into new life, with opening buds and maturing blossoms; with singing birds and glad sunshine; and the air quivering with triumphant song, and full of subtle fragrance.

However it does n't seem possible.

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AN EXTRAORDINARY SCENE. — Second Supervisor Reynolds came into this office a trifle before six o'clock Tuesday evening, and said, —

“ My wife is house-cleaning to-day, and I want you to go to tea with me.”

We could only stare at him with all our might.

“ You don't know what to make of it, eh ? ” he added, pleasantly. “ I don't suppose you do, but

I want to show you something that has never before entered into your philosophy. You have written a great deal of the misery of house-cleaning, and I have no doubt there is a great deal of misery in it in the most of homes, but not in mine. Now, when I left home this morning the house was in its usual order, and my wife said to me, 'Josiah, I 'm going to clean house to-day,' says she, 'and I want you to get your dinner at a restaurant; but to-night,' says she, 'you come to tea, and everything will be at rights,' says she. So I am going to tea now, and I 've come after you to show you a light in the gloom, as it were."

"But are you sane enough to believe that a house can be cleaned in a day, and at night the supper not be served in the sink?"

"Certainly."

"And that there will not even be a bare, wet floor?"

"*Certainly.*"

"Nor even a teacup half full of tacks on the piano?"

"**CERTAINLY.**"

Hardly knowing what we were doing, we got on our coat and hat, and mechanically accompanied Mr. Reynolds home.

On reaching there he opened the door without hesitation. The hat-rack was in its place. We hung our coats and hats upon it, and passed into the dining-room. The table was ready, and Mrs.

Reynolds, in a blue dress, with a white bibbed apron, was there, smiling most sweetly.

"Come and see my house," she said.

We passed into the sitting-room, then into the parlor, and took a look into the bedroom. Everything was in shape. Carpets down, pictures and curtains up, and every article of ornament in position. Except for the bright walls, glistening paint, and clean windows, one would have thought no disarranging hand had ever been there. We were taken into the kitchen, and shown the china closet. Everything was clean and bright, and in its proper place. The rooms on the upper floor were, she assured us, completely rejuvenated, and in shape.

At the table she explained it all, while she served the tea. She said, —

"I engaged four women and one man. I knew that with this help properly managed I could get through the work in one day, and I thought it would be much better to hire extra help, and do it all in one day, than with less help to have it spread over three or four days. At 7.30 this morning we were ready to commence. The carpets on this floor were all taken up, and the man took them out into the yard to beat. The furniture and ornaments were piled in this room. At 8.30 that was done. At 11 o'clock the windows, walls, and floors were washed. The women then went up stairs and did the same with the bedrooms, getting done at 2 o'clock, with an hour for dinner. From that time till 3 o'clock the dishes were

### A SPRING PICTURE.

As glorious as was the dawn of Wednesday, April 30, 1879, a cloud arose and cast the chill of its shadow upon it. It was an imperceptible cloud to many, but to others it was as plain as the day itself,—ay, plainer, because it obscured the day.

There had been showers of rain through the night. The falling drops purified the close air, and moistened the parched earth.

When the sun arose its rays were reflected in millions of tiny water-drops, clustering in diamonds upon every twig of tree and blade of grass. What a grand day it was! How full of healing was the balmy air! How intense the pleasure which filled every heart to overflowing!

All through the day the sun shone, the birds sang, the buds throbbed, and blossoms laughed themselves into glorious life. But the shadow came and grew, and scattered its bitterness over all.

Windows came out, carpets up, and stoves down. Soap and water saturated all indoors, while the dust from scores of carpets wooded over all outdoors.

Man went out among the buds and blossoms and birds.

Of course the weather changed in the night. It always does. There was no sun the next morn-

ing. There was no glad song of birds, no laughing blossoms, no lambent air. A chill rested upon everything outdoors.

Indoors there were no carpets, no stoves, no order, but plenty of dampness and chill.

There are times when cleanliness is next to ungodliness,—so next, in fact, as to be distinguished with the greatest difficulty, if one care to distinguish it at all.

There was a great deal of ungodliness in Danbury on Thursday, May 1, 1879. It permeated every quarter of the village. Men, chilled to the marrow, walking over bare floors which gave back dismal echoes, finding nothing where it belonged, forcing down half-prepared victuals, saturated with the odor of soap, were in a humor that was dangerous to themselves and most uncomfortable to those about them.

There were colds taken on that day that will weaken and annoy for months. There were seeds of disease sown that will never be rooted out. Tempers were soured, heartburnings born, and evils begun whose influence will reach to the grave.

There is nothing funny about this. There is nothing excusable in it. House-cleaning can never, of course, be made a delight, unless it is to a woman; but there is no need of making it a curse. There is no more sense in cleaning a house in the spring than there is in cleaning a *shad in a golden chariot*.

## A WEAK STRANGER.

HE was a rather peacefully inclined appearing party, standing in front of Danbury's best hotel, with his hands crossed in front of him, and looking benignantly upon the sleighing parties. The other party in this drama was a much differently appearing man. He wore rubber boots, whose tremendous legs went up his own nearly to the thigh. His hair was cropped very short to his head, and he wore a slouched hat very much to one side, which gave him a gamy appearance. He was drawing a cutter along on the walk, and he was going at a pretty good rate, and hallooing defiantly and offensively for everybody to "clear the track." It was a spirit of mischief of the worst kind that prompted him to buck up against the peaceful man and rudely disturb his pleasant contemplation.

"You should not be so rude, my friend," expostulated the stranger, mildly.

It was a gentle remonstrance, so gentle that it stirred up every bit of the ferocious courage in the carcass of the gamy individual.

"Oh, I'm *rude*, am I?" he sarcastically uttered in a piping voice, assumed for the occasion. "I'm rude to the delicate child. Ha, ha, ha! ho, ho, ho! Where's your ma, old Beeswax?"

The peaceful man turned his back upon him.

"What er you doing that for, you old rip? Don't you know any better than to turn your back on a gentleman? Who be ye, anyway?"

The speaker dropped the thills of the cutter, and stepped around to the front of the quiet party. It was evident he meant mischief. He winked to the loungers who were eagerly and expectantly looking on, and if ever a wink said, "Now just keep your eyes open if you want to see me dress him," that wink thus gave utterance.

The peaceful man gave no reply to the rude query.

"What's the matter with you? Is your tongue locked, or don't you know enough to talk when you are spoken to?"

"You had better go along and attend to your own business," said the other.

"I had, had I? Well, I want you to understand, you old rip, that this is my business at present, and I'm going to attend to it at once."

And thus saying, he reached out to take hold of the other's collar. What his object was in thus doing is not known, and perhaps never will be, for at the same instant the right arm of the quiet man swung suddenly and swiftly from his body, and the gamy individual left the walk, and flew in a heap into the road, where he arrived in a sitting posture, and with an expression of appalling uncertainty covering his face.

The peaceful man stepped to his help, and said, *in a tone of commiseration*, —

"I am truly sorry I should have been so hasty. I ought not to be so weak."

"*Weak!*" gasped the gamy man with great indignation, rubbing himself as if in doubt as to what portion of his anatomy needed attention first, — "*weak!* It ain't enough, is it, to fetch a man such an onchristian lick, without lyin' about it?"

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#### A SNOW PICTURE.

FALLING snow greeted Danbury as it awoke and came out after the milk Friday morning. It was quiet, unobtrusive snow, and it sank softly into the swarthy arms of the village mud. The air was full of the white flakes, as if an army of foxes were chasing a host of geese across the heavens. All day long the gentle fall continued. It was steady snow that sank down just where it fell, and moved not, and affectionate snow that wrapped its embrace about every twig and branch, and clung there.

In the gray of the declining afternoon the massive elms of Main Street formed an arch of silver, and against the background of the sky made a tracery so delicate in its lines, and exquisite in its loveliness, as to hold every mind with wonder.

And then when the street lamps were lighted the silver became precious stones, and a jewelled

dome spanned the street. Through the greater part of the night the silent work went on, and when the dawn came every branch and twig, every post and rail, every line and wire, was clothed with spotless purity.

Then the sun came and transformed the silver into gold, and the gold fell away, and dropped silently into the necks of the wondering people, and the people ceased to wonder and began to swear.

And the battle of the sun and the snow went on, and the life-blood of the snow ran through the streets, and men who had no rubbers swore also.

And the streets threw off their white robes, and returned to their wallow again.

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#### A CALENDARED APRIL.

THIS is April, 1880. Three calendars in sight unite their authority in proclaiming the fact. We are grateful to calendars for the information, and on the strength of it we go out into the country and listen to the birds, and watch the growing life and smell the grateful odors of wood and earth.

What a delicious listlessness pervades humanity! Nature alone is struggling, and yet its labor is a *gentle unfolding* and developing rather than a

struggle. How balmy the air! How graceful the cloud specks! How refreshing the showers! How blissfully peaceful are all things!

We need not to be told that the earth is awaking from its long slumber, and lazily coming out into life, that the birds and blossoms and zephyrs are here. We do not need to be told this, for we can see it on the calendars, the bright, handsome calendars, with their showy lines and gallant figures.

People are appearing on the streets as the birds are filling the fields. They do not walk; they lounge. They do not look; they glance. They are as listless as the sunlight that falls indolently upon and about them. They might be so many motes floating in it.

The store-doors stand invitingly open under the awnings, revealing cool shadows and quiet recesses. The goods loll on the shelves, the barrels lean against the walls. The passer-by must needs step in,—not so much to trade, as to get into the atmosphere where the storekeeper and his clerks look so cool and comfortable.

School-children trundle their hoops along the walk, and ripple the ambient air with their blessed laughter. Those who love the memory of Washington can entertain no better hope of him than that he was in all his life as happy as the school-children in this dear, delightful April sunshine.

Here comes the oldest inhabitant. April has come with healing on its wings to him. There is

a quiet, peaceful light in the eyes half closed, because of the brightness in the air about him. He walks slowly, as if he were absorbing the precious warmth, and his cane falls in gentle pats upon the pavement.

A breeze springs softly up from out the west, laden with the delicate perfume of opening bud and springing grass, and delightful with the moisture of shaded glens. It toys gently with the children's hair, and coquets, as it passes, with the fringe of the awnings, and turns round the pendent tiers of chip hats, as if it were about to select one for its own giddy head; but in a flash it is off again, and up in the trees, as can be seen by the tremor among the budding twigs. Wherever it goes it is followed by the blessing of him who has bared his brow to its cooling touch, and felt the grateful thrill along every nerve.

All the beauty and glory of these April days, shining upon us through their tears, would not be known to us were it not for the calendars. From the walls of every office in the land they mutely point to April's presence and the beautiful treasures in blossom at her feet. Otherwise we would think it was the middle of March.

### THE DANBURY OESOPHAGUS IN A DEATH-STRUGGLE.

ONE of the most exciting contests on record occurred in the Danbury and Norwalk Railway shops last Thursday. It was a fight against time, and was productive of intense interest. The day before, the wager was made that one of the employés could not eat ten soda-crackers in ten minutes. He immediately closed in with the proposition. The amount involved in this trial of the oesophagus was one dollar's worth of cigars. The time selected was Thursday noon. The contestant loaded his dinner-pail the next morning with ten soda-crackers, to the great astonishment of his wife, who had prepared the usual dinner, and was sure ten crackers would afford him no nourishment. He made no explanation, however, of his purpose. He wanted to astonish and delight her with the result when he got home.

Just before the noon hour he examined the crackers, and, finding they were rather moist, he put them near the fire to dry them thoroughly so as to reduce their size. At the time called he was ready. A watch was brought forth and the moment marked. There was a breathless silence among the observers who crowded about him. He sat down on a chair, with the pail held

between his legs, and one of the crackers in his hand.

“Ready!” was called.

The first cracker passed between his teeth, was hastily chewed and swallowed, and the second followed on its heels. His jaws moved rapidly. Closing with the second began the third cracker. The interest increased. The third cracker seemed to contain more than its predecessor, and the jaws moved with less regularity, although with none the less zeal. But it went down, at just two minutes and thirty seconds. He was now a half-minute ahead, and passed in the fourth cracker with a face full of hope. It dropped to its place at precisely four minutes, and the lead of the fifth was close behind it.

The interest was now intense. The fifth cracker seemed to fill his entire mouth. His jaws moved up and down laboriously. His eyes commenced to increase in size, and the veins on the sides of his face stood out prominently.

At five minutes the cracker was not yet down. Several times it started and fell back. Even with the additional force of the coming sixth it moved with great difficulty. At six and a quarter minutes its rear column, blended with the advance of No. 6, disappeared.

No. 6 cracker seemed to be four times as large as any that went before. It filled his mouth to such a degree as to extend his cheeks until they seemed ready to burst, while every motion of his

jaws gave his face an appearance of *floundering* that was dreadful to contemplate.

He stood upon his feet. He got up on his toes, and settled down upon his haunches. He reached after the back end of that cracker as a dying man reaches out for life.

Seven minutes !

His jaws moved with the greatest difficulty. No longer did they go up and down, but from side to side, and a sort of moaning sound came therefrom. His eyes seemed to be leaving their sockets.

Seven and a half minutes !

In desperation he clutched the seventh cracker and jammed it into the mass already there. The effect was frightful. His mouth was already spread apart nearly unto his ears. The last charge appeared to be endeavoring to lift the top of his head.

Eight minutes !

The crowd were breathless with interest. The contestant was making herculean efforts to free his mouth. His throat worked convulsively. His distended eyes glared at vacancy, while his opened mouth and now almost powerless jaws revealed a mass of broken pastry, rolling and tumbling therein like the heaving of mighty waters.

Nine minutes !

There was no particular change in the struggle, only that the face was almost motionless.

In another minute time was called. By a violent effort the contestant freed his mouth in the

air and sank exhausted upon his chair, while his face began slowly to relax, and the various features to fall back into their place. And thus closed one of the most exciting and instructive contests on record in the history of our beautiful village.

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#### A SUCCESSFUL DEVICE.

THE following novel way of getting rid of a book canvasser is valuable to know. Besides this, there is a pleasant feeling in seeing a photographer annoyed, even if it is of a revengeful cast.

The subject is a Danbury photographer. The canvasser is a woman. The work is valuable, as a matter of course. She said she came to sell him a copy. He told her he didn't want to buy. She said the book was just adapted to him in his business, and he would gain its value a hundred times over. He told her that he had no time to read it. She suggested that he buy it for his wife. It was just the work for a woman. A woman would be benefited by it to a degree beyond computation. He answered that his wife had more books now than she could read. She asked him if he had a son. He said yes. She told him that if this book was chiefly noted for one thing above another, it was in shaping and inspiring the mind of a young man.

Several customers had now arrived, and the artist was plainly showing marks of exhaustion.

"Madam," he said, "what is the price of your book?"

"One dollar and a half."

"You sell these books to make a living?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, madam, I don't want the book. I have no use for it, and I can spare no more time talking about the matter. All your object in selling the book, I suppose, is to get the percentage allowed you by the publisher?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, here," he said, handing her a bill, "is a dollar. Take your profit on the sale out of that, and let that end the matter."

"Thank you," she said, rolling up the money and storing it in her pocket-book, "that is just the profit." And she departed with a very grateful expression on her face.

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#### *AN EVEN EXCHANGE NO ROBBERY.*

MRS. GOODE and Mrs. Meller are next-door neighbors on a Danbury street, and there is a frequent interchange of calls between them; but no evil results therefrom, because both are excellent women.

Mrs. Goode called on Mrs. Meller the other morning to speak to her about some emptings which acted as if they were not going to rise properly. Mrs. Meller hastened back with Mrs. Goode to look at them. After the matter had been discussed with the gravity demanded by the importance of the subject, Mrs. Goode said, —

“Did you hear that story about the Ransoms?”

“Yes; it was awful, was n’t it? Who told you?”

“Mrs. Liebig.”

“She told me, too. I think that woman might be better engaged than in telling stories about people.” Mrs. Meller spoke with some warmth.

“I should say as much,” returned Mrs. Goode. “If there is anything I despise it is tattling. I don’t see anything Christian about it. I abominate it myself. If there was more charity in this world it would be better for all of us.”

“I know it,” added Mrs. Meller, “but people won’t be charitable. They will talk and talk and talk. I don’t suppose that Mrs. Liebig is without a story about somebody a single day. She has got a fearful tongue, and she don’t care who she wags it against. I think she had better look to home.”

“If she did she’d have to give up her care of her neighbors, for she’d have her hands full of her own. But that’s the way with that class. There’s Mrs. Hook, you know. Her tongue is *always* pitching into somebody, and it was only

night before last that my man saw her John carried home dead drunk."

"Why, Mrs. Goode! you don't say so."

"Indeed I do."

"Carried home drunk!" repeated the shocked Mrs. Meller.

"Yes, carried home drunk. And Goode says it's not an uncommon affair, either."

"Well, I declare, if I ever thought that. I always believed John was a model boy. I suppose he gets it from his father."

"His father? Why! did her husband drink?"

"Drink! Did n't you know that? But I forgot, he died before you came here."

"Well, I declare!" ejaculated Mrs. Goode. "That's news to me."

"Oh, yes, he was a drinker. He kept full of rum two thirds of the time. In fact," here Mrs. Meller lowered her voice, "there's good reason to believe that he died in a drunken fit."

"Heavens!" gasped the shocked listener, while her eyes sparkled.

"Yes, Joe Hook died in a drunken fit if ever there was one. But don't speak of it, please."

"Oh, I sha'n't say anything about it. You know well enough that I ain't one of the tattling kind," promptly answered Mrs. Goode. "But who would have thought it. Well, well, well! If I ain't completely stumped. I don't see how she can bear to sail around in the style she does with that awful memory on her."

"Oh, she thinks people don't know it. And now, you say, her boy is going the same way. Do you know, Mrs. Goode," said Mrs. Meller, impressively, "that I believe these slanderers have a judgment sent upon them?"

"Believe it?" exclaimed Mrs. Goode, vigorously, "I *know* it."

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#### CHARACTERISTICS OF FALLING.

PEOPLE fall differently as well as they walk differently, eat differently, or think differently. The particular characteristics of a nature will show out in an emergency as well as in the routine of life. Nearly everybody falls at this season of the year; yet there are those who never fall at all, while there are others who fall frequently. This is, perhaps, to preserve the equipoise. Then there is the heavy faller, the light faller, the mad faller, the smiling faller, the mortified faller, the frightened faller. Some people will pass safely over what other men will slip and fall upon, just as in food one man's meat becomes another's poison.

There was a bit of very smooth ice under a thin sprinkling of snow on the walk at the corner of Main and Munson Streets, Saturday morning. Mr. Merrill's grocery is on this corner, and the *place* has facilities, when the sun shines brightly,

for the standing of a number of the populace who admire sleighing, bright faces, or anything not suggestive of steady, oppressive toil. This bit of ice, like a trembling blossom hidden in the cleft of a rock, or a bright shell embedded in the sands of a desolate coast, had its lesson to teach to humanity. And a deeply impressive lesson it was, too.

There were a number of people who walked over this bit of ice without knowing of its existence, just as there are numbers who trod upon fragrant woodland blossoms, or by exquisite scenes, or over finer feelings, without knowing at all of their existence. They were hurrying, careless people, with minds bent on the things of this world.

Once in a while there would come along an appreciative party, one whose soul was alive to little things. The first of these was an elderly lady, of stocky form. She sat right down in a heap, and her lips formed into the shape of the letter O.

She simply ejaculated, "O my! this is dreadful."

The next was a man gifted in the way of legs. He was walking swiftly. The right foot touched this bit of ice. The right foot then shot off to that side, the left foot left its mooring and flew around in the same direction. This completely reversed the position of the man, he coming down on his hands and knees, and looking up the other

way of the street. He turned very scarlet in the face, but said nothing.

He who followed him was also a slim man. It was the beloved pastor of the Third Church. The shock threw him forward at first, but he recovered himself in time to go down on his back at once. A pail full of molasses which he held in his right hand added to the general interest. He simply said, —

“Mercy on us!” which evidently included the molasses.

The fourth person was a stocky-built party, muffled up to his nose, and trotting along lightly under the inspiration of agreeable thought. Both of his chubby feet gave away almost simultaneously, and in the effort to save himself his feet smote the ice seven times in rapid succession, and then he went down on his side, very red in the face and very low and vulgar in his conversation.

Fifteen minutes later a boy came along on a dead run. His left foot struck the deceptive surface, and he curled up in a heap against a post, without saying anything. He got up and hit a boy in the neck who had laughed at him, and then passed peacefully on.

The next man to fall sat down squarely on the walk with both legs spread out, and a lower set of teeth laying on the hard snow between them. He hastily shoved the teeth in his pocket, jumped up and hurried away, looking very much embarrassed.

business I'd come there an' help scrape you off, but now, cuss you, you can scrape yourself."

A woman who saw the accident invited the unhappy victim into her yard, where she helped him get off his coat, removed his hat and emptied it, and gave him a shingle to scrape off his pants with, and performed other kind offices suggested by her sweet, womanly nature.

It is pleasant to see such things, to find those whose hearts are full of tender sympathy, and whose hands turn to helpful acts.

The little girl did n't come down after the pan until the portly gentleman had got out of the neighborhood.

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#### DOMESTIC STRATEGY.

DOMESTIC exigencies and the means for meeting them scarcely ever form a perfect fit. Opening clams with a poker, driving nails with a flat-iron, and lifting tacks with a razor, are but a few of the extraordinary performances a household is forced into. Bruises and ill-temper are the natural outcome. Perhaps the time may come when a bridal dowry will include a chest of tools, with a carefully prepared manual for the use thereof. At any rate, it is well to believe that the ever-active spirit of progress which is abroad will, in time,

evolve a way out of the trouble. If all the suffering which has sprung from these domestic infelicities were put in print, the array would appall the world. The latest instance occurred in New Haven. A citizen desired to remove a door-knob. He had no screw-driver, of course. He didn't go and buy one. Neither did he attempt to borrow one. You all understand this. He got his butcher knife. If he had had a scythe he would have taken that, as a scythe is even more awkward than a butcher knife. However, the butcher knife did very well for removing the screws and prying off the plate. It had a blade thirteen inches in length, undoubtedly. He set to work. The longer he worked, and the more apparent it became that the butcher knife was miles outside its sphere, the more muscle and zeal he brought to bear upon it. Of course the knife slipped. It could n't help it. It was bound to do it. And when it slipped it carried away something. That was to be expected, of course. But the something on this occasion must have been entirely unexpected to the citizen, as it certainly is to the public. It was the entire end of the citizen's nose.

The blade had shot across it like a meteor, taking it off as clean as it could possibly be done, and giving him a sort of unfinished appearance, as he dashed into the bosom of his family, that must have been exceedingly painful to the startled *beholder*:

## THE CHARM OF GIRLHOOD.

PERHAPS the complaint embodied in the appended communication to the editor may be entertained by many of our readers. Certainly the scene he speaks of is common enough in this fair land :—

MR. BAILEY,— There is a matter, the solution of which is a great social anxiety. I have tried my very best, time and time again, to solve it, but have failed. It may be that you can give me an explanation. I allude to the custom among young ladies in company of getting together on a sofa, or in a corner, and whispering and laughing. I have noticed that at every remark made by one or another, all would laugh right out or snicker behind their hands, or make efforts to suppress what are apparently gigantic convulsions of merriment. What strikes me as remarkable in this connection is, that these same young ladies, capable of saying the wittiest of things under their breath, seem to be incapable of saying anything at all aloud. If this is not a phenomenon, I don't know what a phenomenon is ; and if you can explain it, you will greatly oblige

A PUZZLED YOUTH.

The custom was a universal mystery until nearly two years ago, when a young lady, resident of Danbury, much addicted to the unfortunate habit, being on her death-bed, confessed that the whisperings had no significance whatever. They were merely little nothings passed from one to another to occupy themselves, and laughed over with a view to attract the attention of the young men who

might be present. The physician who attended her made a careful study of the matter then and since, and he is of the opinion that the tendency to these scenes arises from a nervousness peculiar to females, but more strongly developed in the more sentimental, and awakened only when in presence of the other sex. In corroboration of these two declarations, it is well known that the exhibition is never made by men, and in a company formed exclusively of females none of the members show the least inclination to engage in it.

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#### A MECHANICAL PROCESS.

IT is very rarely a plumber is approached by any other tradesman. He has always held a monopoly in a certain science, and perhaps always will; but his throne was considerably shaken in Danbury one day last week.

A gentleman living on Main Street desired to have a basin set in a room on an upper floor. He engaged a plumber to do the work, and also a carpenter to cut the necessary openings through the floors for the pipe which was to run into the cellar. The work was to be done in the afternoon, and the plumber was told that the carpenter would be on hand.

*At one o'clock the plumber was there. He*

went to the room which was to receive the basin, and sat reluctantly down on a step-ladder to wait for the carpenter.

This was not an agreeable performance, but as he was paid for it he could not very well refuse to do it. He sat there and eyed the opposite wall for some little time. Then there was a sort of kaleidoscope of basins, carpenters, railway bonds, and summer excursions, for a moment, and then came unconsciousness.

At the end of two hours he opened his eyes, rubbed them, and looked about. There was no carpenter in sight. He consulted his watch. It was now nearly four o'clock. It was very surprising indeed. He went to the window, and looked out. Did his eyes deceive him? Could it be possible! He looked again. Yes, there was the carpenter standing at the gate and looking down the street with that vigor of expression common to a man who works by the day.

“Hello!” cried the plumber.

“Hello!” responded the carpenter, after locating his compeer.

“I thought you were coming around here to work at one o'clock,” said the plumber, indignantly.

“So I did,” said the carpenter, “but you were n't here.”

“Was n't here, hey?” repeated the plumber, nearly losing all his temper. “I've been up here waiting for you since one o'clock.”

"And I have been down cellar waiting for you since one o'clock," retorted the carpenter.

As extraordinary as it may appear, it was the truth. And the two men growing confidential in the phenomena of the coincidence, it presently transpired that while the plumber was held on a step-ladder in the arms of Morpheus on an upper floor, the carpenter was wooing the beautiful goddess on an ice-chest in the cellar. Each at thirty-five cents an hour.

**MORAL.** — Honest toil will make an ice-chest, likewise a step-ladder, as soft as downy pillows are.

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#### **AN ITALIAN'S VIEW OF A NEW ENGLAND WINTER.**

THERE was a burst in a tin conductor leading from the roof of the house on the corner of Rose and Myrtle Streets the other afternoon, and the water thus escaping ran across the walk. Toward night the weather stiffened up and the loose water became a sheet of ice. About four o'clock the next morning there was a slight fall of snow. In the basement of the building an Italian gentleman has a fruit store. Shortly after six o'clock this morning he had his outside wares in a line of display. *Peanuts* being a specialty with him, two or

three bushels of that article made a tempting pile on a large stand. While he was making this arrangement a carpenter with a tool-box on his shoulder came around the corner, and, stepping on the concealed ice, immediately threw his tool-box into the street, got up himself, looked around to see what had happened, and then picked up his tools. This so amused the Italian that he felt obliged to rush into the shelter of the basement to conceal his delight. Had he been a native of this country, it might have suggested itself to him to sweep the thin guise of snow from the ice and to sprinkle salt or ashes upon it, but being a foreigner, and not very well acquainted with our language, he did not think of this, but instead he posted himself in a position to give him a good view of the corner, and patiently waited for developments. He saw them. If his object was to get an idea of the fulness and flexibility of the English language, he could not have possibly adopted a better course.

Scarcely had the carpenter gathered up his things and limped off, when a man smoking came hurrying along. When he reached the ice he suddenly turned part way around, bit a brier-wood pipe completely in twain, and slid on his breast off from the walk into the gutter. He got up, cautiously recovered his pipe, and melted away. The Italian shook all over.

Following closely after this mishap was a laborer *with a dinner-kettle*. When he touched the ice

it was difficult for the fruit merchant to determine whether it was his feet or another part of his person, — it was done so quick. The new-comer appeared to suddenly come apart and shut up at the middle, and in the same flash the tin pail described a circle of lightning rapidity, and was then slapped against the pavement with terrific force. At the same instant the Italian saw a piece of pie, several half-slices of buttered bread, two hard-boiled eggs, a piece of cold beef, and a fork and spoon fly off in different directions, while a pint tin of coffee made its appearance, and emptied its contents in the prostrate man's lap. While this individual was getting up to his feet, and securing his pail and cutlery, the Italian managed to blend considerable instruction with the amusement.

Then there came a man with a board on his shoulder. He laid down on the board, with one of his hands under the board. Then he got up, and put the injured hand between his knees, where he pressed it tightly, while he used the most dreadful language the Italian ever heard, and he did n't hear it all either, being so convulsed with laughter as to necessarily divide his attention.

And thus the performance went on until after eight o'clock. Scarcely ten minutes elapsed between the acts. Sometimes a boy would be the hero, then again a couple of merchants, or perhaps somebody connected with a bank. *Whoever it might be, he went down, and went down*

hard, and the Italian watched and improved his mind, and began to think that this country had its advantages as well as its disadvantages. It was eleven minutes past eight when the final catastrophe occurred. This was consummated in the person of a long, slim man with a picture under his arm, and a very large woman carrying a basket. The long, slim man was somewhat in advance. The Italian, being impressed with the conviction that something of an extraordinary nature was about to transpire, stared with fairly bulging eyes at the coming figure. No sooner did the tall, slim man touch the treacherous spot, than the venturing foot kicked out most savagely at the atmosphere, and his body shot around like fireworks. The picture flew from his possession at the same moment, and being thus freed he made a spasmodic clutch with all his limbs at once for a place of refuge, and in a flash his legs whipped about a corner leg of the inoffensive peanut stand, and the great shining yellow pyramid followed him to the pavement. The horrified Italian, stunned for an instant by the enormity of the catastrophe, sought to plunge out to the rescue of his goods, but was too late. The fleshy woman, having rushed to the aid of the tall, slim man, who was her husband, was caught herself by the subtle foe, and in her descent, which was by far the most vigorous of the series, she took in two thirds of the peanuts, and the crash of the demolished *fruit*, as she pinned it to the walk, might have been heard four squares away.

The unhappy vendor reached the place in time to be taken in himself, and the addition of one hundred and thirty pounds of macaroni-fed Italian added to the dismal proportions of the scene. How they got disentangled and on their feet no one seems able to explain, but the result was reached amid an appalling uproar of Italian, English, and feminine noises.

What a great matter a little fire kindleth. Ten cents' worth of salt would have saved all the misery and distress. As it is, Danbury has some twenty persons with damaged backs or legs, the owner of the building has four suits on hand for damages, the tall, slim man and his wife are confined to their beds, and on Saturday last the Italian was morosely squatted alongside of the funnel of a steamer bound for Italy.

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#### CHURCH FRONT SKIRMISHERS.

Not a very elevated opinion of the members of the phalanx which concentrates in front of a country church on the close of the service on a Sunday evening is entertained by the public. And sometimes hard things are said against the band. But the public knows not the time, care, expense, self-denial, and discouragement which the *novice at the business* must go through with before

he can become a finished expert. It takes time to do this, and it takes a strong will, to say nothing of a naturally good constitution. In fact many a young man has lost his life in his devotion to this cause, and many another has been discouraged on the way, and fallen out to be seen no more. A reformed member of this body has lately given his experience, and it throws much valuable light on the subject. He says that he made his beginning when he was seventeen. Being a new member, he took his place at the foot of the line. When the ladies came out he fastened his eyes upon them all in a general way, and on a few whom he particularly favored in a special way. He was fairly on fire with a desire to go home with some one of them, but he could not get his courage up to the proper point. Those at the head of the line slid up to the desired partner, sent in a smile as a sort of skirmisher, and sailed off with the prize at once. A half-dozen times he would be just about to make a dash, would then hesitate, and in the pause the fair one would get too far by, or would be snapped up by some more expert brother. After they were all gone he found himself alone in front of the church, gloomily watching the sexton closing the doors. For half that night he walked the deserted street a prey to the most distressing emotions. During the week he spent every spare hour in the seclusion of his room, where he practised assiduously *on the step forward*, and the skirmishing smile.

During that time he "saw home" some seven hundred imaginary young ladies, of all styles and circumstances, in an eminently satisfactory manner. Sunday night found him again at his post, with a new courage in his heart. It was raining slightly, and he had on a pair of very thin boots, but an umbrella kept his hat dry. He was quite confident he had now conquered his diffidence, and would have no trouble, but when the congregation came out, and bright eyes flashed into his, he felt his strength oozing rapidly away.

He let the first opportunity pass, because he was a trifle too nervous to make an attempt. The next he was about to close in with, when the thought came to him that she might refuse. The pitiable condition he would thus be left in made him so sick, that before he could recover therefrom she had been closed in by her sisters, and was gone. The third chance then occurred, and he was about to lift up his leg in advance and start out his smile, when the same sickening possibility again threw its deadly embrace about his heart, and he fell back aghast, and just then her brother came along and walked her off. With the fourth he had no different experience, except that she was scooped up by a party who suddenly and unexpectedly appeared on the opposite side, just as he got his foot pushed forward and his smile well started. He looked so white and helpless at the end that the sexton sympathizingly asked him *if he was subject to fits.* The depression of this

with that object he thrust his thumb into the opening, after getting his sleeve to the armpit, and his bosom, face, and hair deluged with the fluid. This was a success, and for a moment Mr. Coville plumed himself upon it. Then came the realization that while the beer was safe it was only at his personal inconvenience in the character of a spigot, a light he had never before considered himself in, and which did not now bring him the most elevating of emotions. On the contrary, Mr. Coville was inclined to resent his situation as something forced upon him against his will, and as being entirely foreign to his hopes and plans in this life. He was down in the cellar alone,—at one end of the cellar, while the spigot was at the other, in sight, but as far removed from him as if it floated in the middle of the Caspian Sea. He could hear some movement up stairs, and a sort of rumbling sound like the movement of a body over the floor, and he shouted aloud for aid.

Now it is a singular fact that while one can hear a voice ordinarily delivered in another room, the loudest scream from him will not reach the owner of the voice. If Mr. Coville was not before aware of this fact, he was made to realize it now. Shout after shout ascended from the cellar, while the pain in his thumb crept up his arm, and the beer oozed from his hair and dripped silently from his face. It was a time to think, and Mr. Coville tried to think calmly and dispassionately, but as

the sounds from above assumed a more definite shape, and gradually communicated to his mind that his son and heir was making a rapid circuit of the dining-room astraddle of a chair or some other object, which improvised animal he was stimulating to the highest possible speed by sundry cries of an encouraging nature, his mind lost its power of concentration, and the atmosphere of the cellar became sensible of being disturbed by other sounds than those directly appealing for help. In fact, Mr. Coville was mad; stark, staring, raving mad. In so far as the *rôle* of a spigot would permit, Mr. Coville jumped up and down, and wiggled his body, and contorted his face. Finally the strength of purpose, hitherto nourished by the contemplative cost of the beer, exhausted the nourishment, and thus exhausted itself, and wrenching his thumb from the barrel, the unhappy man started for the stairs, being materially aided therein by the force of the escaping beer, which caught him fairly in the back of the legs as he turned to go. Mr. Coville may not have had any definite purpose in view when he clawed his way up the stairs, but on reaching the dining-room and discovering the hope of his life prancing about on the back of a prostrate chair, with a face shining with wholesome delight, his struggling and tortured mind fastened on this circumstance with electric speed.

The flavor of camphor which is distilled from *young Coville* as he moves about since then,

would lead a stranger to infer that a ferocious attack from an army of moths was momentarily threatening the unfortunate youth, and was averted only through the united efforts of fifteen alert and uncompromising druggists.

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#### A FEW HINTS FOR THE TABLE.

WE are sorry to see a disposition on the part of some of our exchanges to make jests of asparagus eating. It is by nature a delicious vegetable, but in build it is designed to prove a decided injury to people of infirm digestion, that is, when cooked in the whole, which is the popular way. A man unused to table etiquette should, when invited out, or when at a hotel table, decline such articles that he is confident he cannot dispose of with ease. These are, principally, asparagus, green corn on the cob, chipped potatoes, small game, oranges, and stewed fruits whose pits are too large to be swallowed with safety. However, he does not always use this firmness, and his plate comes to be filled or surrounded by things which are designed to build him up, but which threaten to tear him down, and before them he quails in fear and confusion. If he does not have the strength to decline them when passed, he must either leave them about his plate as embossed

monuments of his folly, or risk his life, and the garments of his neighbor, in their disposal. To the uninitiated a stalk of asparagus is a formidable object. To get it into his mouth without dropping it inside of his vest requires tact. He observes that the popular way is to use it as a bow with his mouth as the fiddle. It is rarely he ventures on this plan, from an exaggerated opinion of its magnitude. And the caution is proper enough, perhaps, as in applying the bow he may miscalculate the exact location of the fiddle; and to offend in this respect, even in the smallest degree, is to disarrange one's nose or mar one's chin. Then, again, there is another danger. The stalk may lop down, causing an entirely new effect to be made; or it may part in the middle from too great an enthusiasm in closing upon it, leaving a very small particle in the mouth, with the handle in the fingers, and the most palatable and larger part inside the vest. If taken up as a whole on the fork, and we find that new beginners generally pursue this course, it has to be coaxed and crowded into the mouth with as much demonstration as though it was a dog being put out of doors. And when safely housed there is the indigestible end or handle to be disposed of. It cannot be returned to the plate. To be swallowed at all, it must be chewed very fine, and in this process all the delicacy and rich flavor of the balance of the stalk is lost in the depraved taste of the tough fibres. A man should become thor-

oughly familiar with asparagus before going into society with it. Corn on the cob is rather difficult to manage. Perhaps the better way is to cut off the corn, but to the beginner very unsatisfactory results quite frequently attend this operation. If he bears too hard, and he invariably will, on the top of the cob, the lower end, resting on the plate, will suddenly slip from its place, and plough through the small dishes with awful ferocity, leaving ruin and desolation in its train. Stone fruits should be prepared without the pits, except in the case of cherries, whose pits are so small as to readily permit of their being bolted into the system in great quantities. But with prunes and peaches it is an altogether different matter, and unless a man's oesophagus is of a most accommodating nature, a less alarming disposition of the pits than swallowing them must be discovered. This is a serious dilemma to the diffident man. In the home circle they may be spilled out on the cloth or thrown under the table. But in society these simple means of escape are frowned upon. If a man has a goodly number of hollow teeth, they can be quietly conveyed to such receptacles for the time being, but in absence of this he must either eject them into a spoon and thence to the plate, as society demands, or carry them banked under his tongue until he can get away from the table and slip them back of the ottoman. Next to asparagus, chipped potatoes are a source of well-grounded apprehension in the

mind of the man who has given no study to table etiquette. Of a strikingly tempting appearance, he takes them on his plate without realizing the awful danger he is rushing upon. He does understand that a knife is tabooed in lifting food to the mouth, and he resorts to his fork, and begins to think that there are some things which are more easily lifted with the latter than with the former article. A chipped potato is such a thing in appearance only. It cannot be speared without breaking it, and to get one across the tines is only to follow it four times around the circumference of the plate, and to have it roll off nineteen out of every twenty times it is secured. A slice of chipped potato, if untrammelled in its movements, will weaken the most powerful intellect, unsupported by experience. So, really, there is nothing in these things to make sport of, but very much indeed to deplore and grieve over.

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***WILL HAVE IT ALWAYS ON HAND.***

THE action of the Danbury authorities in building a pen wherein tramps can break stone for their food and lodging comes none too soon. The awful evil of irrepressible pedestrianism overshadows this fair land with the darkest cloud that has come *upon us since 1861.* The papers teem with chron-

icles of brutal acts by tramps, and Danbury itself, more conservative than any part of America, added, in the past week, its mite to the general horror. The tramp in question was a bandaged piece of moral and physical rottenness, held together by the bandages. Blear-eyed, red-faced, low-browed, he presented a spectacle far from inspiring. He entered the drug store and demanded ten cents' worth of alcohol. The clerk saw the danger of letting him have it, and told him it was not kept there, but could be obtained at a grocery across the street, pointing to that place of business. The tramp stalked over there, and asked for the stuff. The grocer and his assistant, and a pompous man of great breadth of beam (as most pompous men have), were present. The grocer said he did not keep alcohol. The tramp knew better. The young man across the way had said that alcohol could be got there, and he was going to get it. He glared around upon the three auditors in a most uncompromising manner. The grocer again repeated that he did not keep alcohol, never kept it, had no occasion to, and, with a deprecatory flourish of his hands, suggested that perhaps some one would come along and maintain that he kept mahogany grape-vines on sale. The clerk, a young person with a colorless face, was eating a piece of cheese. He suggested that the customer might possibly be drunk. But it was the pompous person who was the most seriously affected. He had been talking about the country,

and how it ought to be managed, and what he would do if he were the President. And so he had been interrupted. He looked through his spectacles upon the bold-faced tramp in a way calculated to drive him into the uttermost corners of the earth, but, owing to some unknown defect, failed to perform that service. For a moment he was dumb with amazement at the temerity of the new-comer, but finally recovering his senses, he indicated the great depth of his feelings by a long-drawn, sonorous breath.

“Look at me, you wretch!” he thundered.

The tramp looked at him. There was not a quiver in the bloated face, not a waver in the bleared eyes.

“How dare you come here into the company of respectable people with your tainted —”

“Whoop !”

That was all, but it was a cry that started the ceiling, made the boxes on the shelves fairly jump, and caused the clerk to bolt in an eminently dangerous manner a full ounce of cheese.

It came from the tramp, suddenly, without warning. And then he *spread* himself. The grocer went down in a flash. The clerk spun around like a top, with a feeling back of his ear as if a freight train had passed through his skull. And the man for alcohol was gone, and in an empty barrel stuck the pompous citizen, with a slit in his nose, his chin whiskers full of blood, *his spectacles* nowhere in sight, and a look of the

utmost consternation petrifying every feature of his appalled countenance. The barrel had to be taken apart. But the tramp was not found.

And the grocer has ordered a tank of alcohol.

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#### A STABLE POEM.

A DECIDED change has taken place in Slim Jim. Slim Jim is the help at Marshall's livery stables. He is a young man twenty-six years old. He has been in the stables for four years, and is admirably qualified to perform the multifarious duties belonging to the situation. From association and sympathy he has mastered all the details of the business, and is really invaluable to Mr. Marshall. He knows every horse in Danbury, knows its weaknesses, can tell a defect as soon as he sees the possessor of it, and has a very good idea of horse medicines. Slim Jim wears loud colors, his hair cut short, no beard, no suspenders, the finest of fine boots with high heels, and the pantaloons legs rolled tastefully at the bottoms. Slim Jim is rather proud of his boots, and rests in comfort as to the rest of his form. He is a fair hand at cards, proficient in profanity, rather graceful in lounging, and when not on duty is adorning some neighboring bar. Wherever Jim is, he talks horse. *Horse is his hobby.* He is the most masculine of

men. He quite frequently drives out ladies, but it is evident to the most casual observer that the horses, not the load, engross his whole attention. He apparently has none of the finer qualities of mind and heart. He never notices flowers, nor birds, nor cloud formations ; neither does he speak of running brooks, or mossy dells, or science, or poetry. Even his cards and drinking and lounging and figure are all subordinate to this one subject, the horse. He has no sympathies beyond this. He has had no life separate from it. Although young in years, he is old in feelings, old in expression of those feelings. Whatever he does to display himself is done to gain the admiration of his own sex. He drinks, and drives, and talks, and dresses, and postures for the sake of exciting their envy. The last woman might be in the crater of Vesuvius, painting birds on dust-pan handles, so far as he was concerned.

But a change has come over Slim Jim. He is not so much in bar-rooms as in front of them now. There is a dreamy, far-away look in his eyes. He puts on his coat when leaving the stables, and unless talking strictly horse, is subject to spells of absent-mindedness. He is less coarse, less blustering, and more subdued in his profanity. He drinks less, and differently ; not throwing it down with the careless indifference of a veteran, but rather sipping it thoughtfully, like as one who may be preoccupied by far weightier matters. He is gentler, too, in his work, and closely attentive

• to the ladies who come in his care, and more observant of lawns, and stores, and the style as affected by the better classes. A new world has opened up to Slim Jim,—a world that, until recently, has been veiled in a great darkness before his eyes. The cause of this marvellous change in Slim Jim works in one of our hat factories. She is seventeen years old, apparently, and a spry-looking, bright-eyed girl. We saw her go by the office the other day, and we saw Jim with her, and then we understood at a glance the secret of the great change which has fallen upon our horse friend. There was something very interesting in this spectacle, and something beautiful in the conduct of Slim Jim, it was so tender and respectful. There were about four feet of space between them, but if it had been miles instead, there was a light in his eye which showed that his heart spanned the distance. She walked with her head slightly bent, but not so much so as to hide the pleased expression of her face. His face was radiant. It was not much he was saying, as his lips moved but little, but it was evident that he was seriously impairing the strength of his eyes, in trying to take in all the glory of her fresh young face, with those organs looking straight ahead. If anything, there was more color in his face than in hers, but he undoubtedly believed the public was unaware of it. When he got opposite the stables, he left her to cross *the street*, and almost pushed her over in his trep-

idation. Slim Jim is submerged in a sweet dream, and amid its golden glories he is losing his identity. He almost went to church with her last Sunday night. That is, he *casually* overtook her on her return, a short distance from the door of the temple, and accompanied her home. In a very short time he will be standing in the porch waiting for the close of the service, and later still will be found holding a hymn-book with her in a back pew.

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## MRS. COBLEIGH'S DISH-WATER.

MR. COBLEIGH went up stairs into a bedroom the other noon, after dinner, to move a heavy clothes-press for his wife. He worked away at it some five minutes, and was getting it about where he wanted it, when the awful affair tipped over and came down so suddenly that Mr. Cobleigh was unable to get out of the way in time, and being knocked over a chair, he fell in such a way as to have one of his legs pinned in between the clothes-press and the chair. As he was on his breast, he found himself powerless to get away, and so he screamed to his wife to come to his aid. He knew he could make her hear if she was down stairs, and he had heard her moving about but a moment before. But there was no response to his *cries*. He shouted till he was hoarse, but

still no answer. Five minutes passed, — ten, fifteen: A half-hour was gone. It seemed almost a century to the imprisoned man, with his nose so close to the rag carpet that it seemed as if he would never get the odor out of his system. Soon he heard a door open and shut, down stairs, and gathering up his remaining energies he gave a final yell. In a moment his wife had reached him. Her first prompting was to ask him how he came in such a plight, but a glance at his inflamed face checked the prompting, and she speedily set to work to rescue him from his unhappy position. When he got out he wanted to know where in thunder she'd been, leaving him to die under a clothes-press. She said she had just stepped over to Mrs. Murray's "for a minute while her dish-water was cooling." Mr. Cobleigh did n't receive this explanation with a very good grace, and appeared somewhat disposed to reflect on the qualities of dish-water for cooling. Mrs. Cobleigh had been gone nearly three quarters of an hour, but the time had not been lost. During that brief conference with Mrs. Murray she had learned a new style of knife-plaiting, how many yards of material it took for a dolman, what was going to be worn in the way of an overskirt, what Mrs. Murray's hat would cost, besides a thorough canvass of what she had better have for a summer dress just to wear afternoons. All this information Mrs. Cobleigh acquired while Mr. Cobleigh was closeted with the clothes-press, but she *prudently kept it to herself.*

## AUTUMN TINTS.

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### MR. COVILLE TAPS HIS CIDER.

WHEN Mr. Coville got home at teatime Saturday evening, he found that an ordered barrel of cider had been delivered, and was now in the cellar. After supper he went down to tap it. His wife carried the light, and Master Coville added the attractions of his personal appearance to the procession. Mr. Coville, armed with a faucet and a hammer, approached the barrel. Mrs. Coville held the light in the usual manner, that is, so as to shut out everybody's view but her own from the desired point. Master Coville stood by the side of his mother, hanging to her dress, and greedily taking in the proceedings. It was a delicate operation, removing a plug and inserting a faucet into a barrel of new cider. As the head of the house proceeded in the task, the attention of the observers grew more and more intense. Gentle taps with the hammer, alternating on each side of the plug, loosened it gradually, but surely. When it was sufficiently loosened to be drawn out by a sharp wrench of the hand, Mr.

Coville proceeded to give it the wrench in question, but was somewhat anticipated by the plug itself, which, suddenly leaving the barrel and plunging into Mr. Coville's waistband, was immediately followed by a tremendous burst of cider. As the plug struck him, Mr. Coville was inclined to double forward, but was at once diverted from this purpose by the cider, and went over on his back instead, throwing the hammer impulsively, and dragging down Mrs. Coville spasmodically. The extinguishing of the light in the descent left the family in total darkness, relieved only by the gasping sounds of Mr. Coville, the moans of Mrs. Coville, and the indignant cries of Master Coville, who, being caught under his mother in the overthrow, was madly endeavoring to extricate himself, and vociferating the awful things he would do if he was not at once relieved. The whole effect was most appallingly heightened by the hiss and splash of the escaping cider. In a moment the unhappy family were on their feet, and dragging their dripping and somewhat ruffled plumage up the stairs and into the light. Another lamp was secured, and Mr. Coville hastened down stairs, when he not only discovered that the cider was entirely gone, but that the hammer, in its flight, had taken in the hanging shelf on which had reposed twenty-two glass jars of preserves, and rendered nineteen of them, with their contents, a heap of ruins. The remarks Mr. Coville designed delivering in a high key of voice on discov-

ering the loss of his cider were utterly submerged in the horror of the subsequent discovery, and he hastily hurried up stairs and passed silently to bed. The next morning he did not wait for breakfast, but was earlier at the store than he had been in seven years, and remained there until night. He rightly conjectured that his wife's feelings, on viewing the preserve wreck, would be too sacred for observation.

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#### A WRETCHED CUSTOM.

COME, now, what infernal barbarity is this, leaving a clothes-line out after dark! A great deal of funny comment has been made upon the custom by thoughtless people, but it is a most serious matter, and it is high time the tomfoolery was abolished. We are just as ready as any body to see the funny side of a thing, but we have ceased to observe anything amusing in being unexpectedly sawed across the neck, or rasped across the face, by a clothes-line. It is time there was a legislative enactment to either hang clothes-lines sixty feet above the earth, or make leaving them out after nightfall a State-prison offence. It is a most incomprehensible fact that a clothes-line is always hung across the garden path.

*If the yard was ten miles square, and a path*

two feet wide crept along close to the fence, and the woman had but eight feet of line, she would manage to cover the path. Whether this is because she is perverse, or cannot help it, we do not know. We only know that it is so, and that it is an appalling evil. No home circle is safe where this custom prevails. It matters not how good-natured a man is, it matters not how carefully he has been educated, it matters not how lofty and noble are his aspirations, the moment a clothes-line catches him under the chin, especially if he has a pan of ashes in his arms, that moment he sinks with awful velocity to the level of a brute, and proceeds to act out the conditions thereof at once. In its proper place, a clothes-line is a valuable companion, but across a path after dark, it is simply a brutalizing force.

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#### A MELANCHOLY EPISODE.

IT was at this season of the year, just seven years ago, that an extraordinary scene occurred in Danbury. It was in the evening, and a couple were bringing in several pots of plants from the yard to save them from the frost, which the temperature of outdoors threatened. While thus engaged she spoke, referring to a geranium she had in her hand:—

“I would n’t lose this for a great deal, as mother gave it to me.”

He looked at it.

“Your mother gave it to you? Guess not. I bought that plant myself.”

“Why, it’s no such thing!”

“I tell you I did!” speaking with much warmth.

“And I tell you you did n’t,” she firmly asserted. “Do you suppose I don’t know what was given to me?”

“Do you suppose I don’t know what I bought with my own money?”

“If you say you bought that geranium,” she said, speaking very slowly, and with white lips, “you say what you know to be false.”

“Do you mean to say I lie?” he hissed.

“If you say that, I do.”

“You shall be sorry for this,” he threatened.

“Never!” she retorted.

He put on his hat and coat, and left the house.

That was seven years ago this fall. She never saw him again, nor heard from him in all that seven years. What must have been the thoughts, the agony of mind, endured by that wretched wife in that time, no one on earth knows. She kept her thoughts to herself, and patiently, as far as outward appearance went, bore the burden put upon her.

On Friday evening of last week her door opened, and a man walked into her presence. There was a look, a cry, and she was in the arms of her hus-

band. What a happy home was that! All the agony of the seven long years was forgotten in that hour of reconciliation and reunion. A hearty supper was spread, and with tears and smiles she hovered about him, ministering to every want. After supper there was a long talk of the past.

"It is so singular," she said, speaking in one of the pauses, "that it should have happened as it did. I can scarcely comprehend it all. It seems like an awful dream. We both lost our tempers, and we have both suffered for it. The miserable geranium! Do you know that I cannot bear to see one of those plants? I told mother to come and take it back, for I would n't have it in sight."

"What!" he ejaculated. "Do you still persist in saying that she gave it to you?"

"Why, John, of course she did. Have n't you got over that idea yet?"

"No, I have n't," he persisted, his face darkening. "I bought that geranium just as sure as I'm a living man."

She thought of his years of cruel desertion, of all he had caused her to suffer, because of his obstinacy, and her heart hardened and her face flushed.

"You are mean to say that, when you know it is false."

"It is n't false. It's heaven's truth."

"It's no such thing. It's a mean, contemptible lie."

He jumped up from the chair, seized his hat and

coat, and shot out of the house in a flash, and she never uttered a word in protest. She sat there with clinched hands and a white face, and let him go.

And so he is gone. And to-day she is alone again with the old burden and the old pain.

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#### MRS. SNIPKINS'S PLUMS.

MR. SNIPKINS, a little man with wiry side-whiskers and a bald head, is very fond of a social time. The other day he invited several of his fellow-clerks to spend the evening at his house, the programme embracing euchre and "hot stuff." The boys were to be up to the house at eight o'clock. Mr. Snipkins went home to get his tea, and prepare for them by working Mrs. Snipkins into the proper mood for the occasion. He was aware that unless that excellent lady was in a pliable humor, the possibility of working a half-dozen men into the house was the most chimerical of all chimeras. At eight o'clock the invited guests, with two decks of cards and a quart bottle, approached the house. They found Mr. Snipkins at the gate. He had been waiting for them. There was a troubled look on his face.

"It's too bad, boys," he said, apologetically, "but I'm afraid that—that we'll have to postpone our little affair until another evening."

"Why, what 's the row?"

"Well, you see," said Snipkins, hesitatingly, and with an apprehensive look to the house, "it 's the old lady. I 'm sorry, boys, but it can't be helped, — it really can't be helped. I did n't know she was doing it, of course, when I invited you for to-night, or I would n't 'a' done it."

"Doing what?" asked the man who had the bottle.

"Doing grapes," replied Snipkins. "You see the man came with them this afternoon, an' she skinned them an' had them on a b'ilng when I got home; an' they 've been b'ilng ever since, but they don't jell. No, no," Mr. Snipkins shook his head despondently, "they don't jell worth a cent. She 's got a roaring old fire, an' she 's red as a beet in the face, an' she whips around there without saying a word, but looking volumes. I tell you, boys, I 'm mighty sorry, but it won't do. There 's no use talking party when grapes act like them. We 'll have to put it off another night." Mr. Snipkins spoke with so much feeling, and cast so many apprehensive glances toward the house, that the party were convinced of the futility of their plans for the evening, and at once retired.

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SEVERAL million people have been trying this month of October to get the best of a stove-pipe. But they have n't done it; they never have done

it; they never will. However well they may have matched last year, no two lengths of pipe will match this year. You may put marks a foot long upon them, but this will not do. You may lock up each length in a room by itself, but yet when they come to be used you will find they will not come together as they came apart. We can't tell in what way it was done, but we are certain those lengths came out of that room in some way, and exchanged places with each. If not, why are they so unfitted to each other? It is utterly impossible to get the best of a stove-pipe. What will expand one length will contract another, and even a single length has been known to expand at one end while it contracted at the other. There is a subtle influence in the atmosphere which causes this. No one has as yet been able to discover what this is, and until it is made known there is no use expecting to get a stove-pipe safely together, even if you should set on the lengths all summer, and have your meals brought to you.

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THE most melancholy aspect of this melancholy season of the year is not in the evidences of a dying nature, but is manifest in that part of the home known as the kitchen. There is a damp, dismal, exhausted air about the kitchen these mornings, which gives it an appearance of having been *wrung out*. The flies have gone, but they have left

sufficient indications of their sojourn on the window-glass, the casings, and walls, and also on the several dishes which are brought out from the recesses of the pantry and deposited on the breakfast-table to be washed. The temperature of the room, owing to the escaping steam, the fact that the door opens either outdoors or into a passageway, and a raised window, is chilling and depressing. The temper of the genius presiding over the whole is somewhat similar. Dabs of breakfast refuse raise their mournful heads here and there. The dirt from the floor is huddled up on the zinc, and showing a disposition to resist being shoved out of sight under the stove. But the most depressing feature of the scene is a part of the last watermelon of the season, tasteless and flabby, as if it had absorbed within itself a portion of the scents, flavor, and characteristics of its surroundings ; and when the man of the house looks over the room and its contents, and feels his heart sink within him, he is confident that without the melon the general desolation would be without a fitting climax.

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MR. WHIPPLE, who is a clerk in a dry-goods store, has been requested by Mrs. Whipple to bring home a box to keep potatoes in. Her father, who is a farmer, had promised to bring her a bushel of potatoes, and she was expecting him in every day with them. There was no place to put them, unless they were laid on the cellar

floor, which was not considered desirable in domestic economy. Mr. Whipple was a good man. He promised to bring up the box. He honestly meant to do so. There can be no doubt of that. Saturday Mrs. Whipple's father came with the potatoes, but there was no box to receive them, so he dumped them in a heap on the floor. That night at tea Mrs. Whipple, seeing Mr. Whipple without the box, told him, with deep feelings, the result. Mr. Whipple was contrite, but he said that he couldn't think of everything, and spoke with some resentment. Late in the evening he went down in the cellar, with a lamp and a pitcher, for cider, and stepping on the potatoes which he did not notice, and which he had forgotten all about, he was struck with the impression that the entire cellar was slipping away from him, and seeking to save himself he smashed the lamp on the floor at one side, and smashed the pitcher on the other side. Then he struck the back of his head against a post with a view to illuminating the cellar (in which he succeeded). Then he rolled over, and got on his knees, and crawled slowly and painfully up stairs, the whole performance taking scarcely ten minutes.

## A NOVEMBER FROLIC.

TO-DAY is a genuine November day. The air is keenly cold, the sky is clear of clouds; the sun shines as clear as a diamond, its rays yielding the same amount of heat; the roads are hard and gray; the wind comes in overpowering gusts, taking up the dust and sending it in flying volumes through every street. It has all the peculiarities which have distinguished this wind above the wind of any other month since time began. Chief among these is the quality of not appearing when expected, and of not being expected when it does appear. This wind is holding high carnival to-day. It is rattling the windows, and trying the doors, and investigating ash-heaps, and carrying pails from the back stoops. It is playing all sorts of strange music around the corners and through the trees. It is thundering over the meadows, and dancing giddily through the streets. It is such a free-and-easy wind, such an impudent trifler with the property of others.

We hardly dare say how many hats have crossed the perspective from our window and gone rolling down the street in the last half-hour, but it seems as if there had been an almost unbroken procession of them.

There is a dreadful fascination in observing them, — in seeing a hat appear, and immediately behind

it the owner. So closely does he follow upon it that there is bare chance from seeing the hat to speculate as to what sort of a person the wearer must be, when he appears on the scene himself.

The first hat belonged to a boy. It was a little hat with a very round crown and a stiff brim, and it sailed along on the brim. The owner thereof was close upon it, putting in his very best, and making both of his legs appear like twenty legs in the rapidity of their movements. He finally captured it by the ingenious device of jumping on it with both feet. Then he picked it up, brushed it off with his elbow, slapped it on to his head, and immediately put after another boy on whose face he just then detected a dishonest smile.

Then came a large soft hat, whirling swiftly, and following it was a cloud of dust, and in the cloud, like some improved allegory, was the owner of the hat. He was a farmer in appearance, and wore a coat so long in its skirts as to greatly impede the free and graceful action of his limbs. His lips were tight together, and his hands clinched, as if he were completely immersed in intense thought, as he undoubtedly was. The hat struck against a post and settled there, and he made a spiteful dive for it, and then it lifted up and moved on, and he started off after it, and both passed out of sight. Perhaps the wind may go down with the sun.

It is just as well he got away as he did, for immediately after two hats came rolling along

over and over, and two men, puffing and blowing, and very mad, as every motion indicated, came dashing after them. Just then a boy's hat appeared, and being either lighter, or more favorable to the wind, than the others, speedily overtook them, and the boy himself made such remarkable headway that he was soon up to the men, very much to their disgust, as his wild appearance and yells added none whatever to the dignity of their position. For an instant the three were abreast, and then the boy went ahead, and at the same time his hat rolled over and stopped. One more bound and he was to it, and throwing himself down to secure it, threw himself exactly in the way of the two flying men. There was no time to stop ; there was no time to think. In a flash the two went over him, a fierce gust of dust enveloped them, and through the maze, on which the clear sunlit fell and transformed the atoms into gold, there appeared an incredible number of arms and legs cutting the air and smiting at each other in hopeless confusion. Then the scramble being over the two men got up on their feet and glared at each other with inflamed passion distorting their faces, in absence of any opportunity to vent their wrath on the boy, who, by that mysterious process peculiar to boys, had secured his hat and prudently retired to a safe distance. What the two men would have done unto each other had there been the chance, is not known, but the loss of their hats happening to strike them simultaneously, they at

once put off after them, running side by side with delightful harmony.

As we close this little sketch we glance again out of the window. A silk hat is rolling by. Like a porpoise it rolls from side to side, and tumbles ahead. In active pursuit is a tall man with elongated face. He is dressed in the extreme of fashion. He is a city man, and his clothes are city made. He did not come here to show them, but now that he is here he is glad to display them, and is satisfied to bask in the sunshine of the peasantry's admiration. At this present moment he is not basking, although the sunshine is in abundance, as the peasantry are on the corners, on the hotel porch, in the post-office door, before the saloon, looking upon him with all the eyes they possess, and admiring and enjoying him as he can never hope to be admired and enjoyed again in his life. And his flushed face shows that he knows he is doing something that interests and comforts them. He has a very red face, and very staring eyes, and a very murderous expression generally. The cruel wind has wrenched his hair from its pomade fastenings and thrown it over his eyes and across his ears, and wrong way up the back of his head. It has sent the tails of his coat to the front in a very undignified manner. It has blown his trousers legs to the front also, filling them out like bellying sails, and leaving at the back an unexpected thinness of shank to the astonished view of the beholder.

He ran with all his strength, and while he ran the peasantry cheered and shouted and laughed. Every few strides he would pause and invite the peasantry to step out in the road and have their several heads knocked off. Then he would go on again. And so he has passed from sight and from the town, with life before him and the grand Atlantic but twenty-two miles ahead.

## THE SMALL BOY.

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### A MISERABLE SON.

SHE was a Nelson Street woman with more than the usual amount of cares cast to her lot. Her husband was very sick, with no hope whatever of his recovery. She sat in the kitchen, alone by herself, the other evening, trying to rest herself, when the silence was broken by a scuffling and shouting and howling in the street. She paused a moment in an effort to distinguish the nature of the trouble by the sounds it was sending forth. As she listened, one cry rose above another. At its coming her cheeks flushed, and hastily throwing a shawl over her head, she went out to the front just in time to receive her own son, and to see the son of the excellent woman next door being led into the house, weeping and moaning, by his mother. She took in this situation in a glance, and then the color entirely left her face.

“Come here!” The fury of a century was compressed in that command. The youth was on the point of dodging around the house when these *two words smote his purpose and clove it in twain.*

She took him by the collar, and fairly skimmed him through the hall and to the kitchen. There was a nameless fear in her heart. Her face was very white, and the fingers which grasped the collar of his jacket worked with a spasmodic twitching.

"What's the matter out there?" she demanded, in a low, concentrated voice.

"Nothin'."

"What was you doing, I say?"

"Well," snuffled the pinned-down youth, "Bill, he took an' kicked over my wagon, an' I just let him have one across the snoot."

"You struck him, you good-for-nothing imp?" she hissed.

"Well, he'd no right to kick my—" He stopped just there. There was a look in his mother's face that choked off his utterance. The eyes that looked down in his were ablaze with passion. It seemed as if their fire would burn into his very soul. She drove him down to the floor, and held him there as if he had been pinned by iron bands.

"What do you mean," she hissed, "by making this row? (Shake.) Don't you know what you are doing? Can I never keep you out of deviltry? (Shake.) I'll learn you better, or I'll smash every bone in your body, you miserable brat! (Shake.) How dare you strike that woman's boy, when your father's here at death's door, and she has the best chairs in the neighborhood? Oh!" she added,

with a passionate sob, "that heaven should curse me with such an unfeeling brute for a son!" And throwing him from her, she dropped in a chair, and buried her face in her apron to hide the tears of bitter shame.

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#### WHAT SHE DIED OF.

A CURIOUS animal is the boy. Two of them were going through Pine Street the other morning, when, as they were about passing each other, one of them said,—

"You don't know who's dead at the baker's?"

"Yes, I do, too."

They had now passed each other, and were walking backwards so as to confront one another.

"Who is it?"

"It's the baker's wife."

"Ho, ho!" laughed the other, derisively, "that shows all you know about it. It ain't the baker's wife at all; it is his wife's sister."

The advocate of the wife flushed deeply at this.

"Smart, ain't you?" he shouted, for the distance between them had grown considerable. "I bet you don't know what she died of."

"What'll you bet?" yelled the other.

"I'll bet you anything."

"I bet you don't know yourself what she died of."

“Yes, I do!”

“What was it, now?”

“Well, I know, and you don’t.”

“Yes, I do, too. She died of consumption,” said the other in desperation.

“Ho, ho, ho! what a greeny,” shouted the other, in a burst of joyful triumph. “Consumption! Ho, ho, he, he! Well, if I didn’t know more than that I’d go put my head to soak.”

Redder than fire grew the face of the defeated boy.

“If you know so much, what was it she died of?”

“She died of typhoid fever!” shouted the victor, his features radiant with the reflection.

“Huh!” responded the other boy, “I knew that all the time. I was only codding you with consumption.”

And they both turned and pursued their respective ways, neither being quite satisfied with the result.

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#### THE BOY BARNACLE.

HE was a street Arab, and walking down town ahead of us the other morning. We had a good view of him, and fell to studying his clothes. There was a mossy grayness to his garments. His shoes were broken at the tops and at the

sides, and run over at the heels ; they were very gray. The stockings which showed above the tops seemed to be but a continuation of the shoes. His pants were broken in places, and had been patched and fallen away again. The same of his jacket, which exhibited, in addition, feeble greenish-yellow patches, frayed out at the edges, and worn into a glossy shimmer in the centre. His shirt collar was as brown as the neck which it guarded. His hair, stumpy and unkempt, was held down by a brimless hat, as gray and as old as the rest of his apparel. It was a spirit of repose resting upon the whole which made this boy conspicuous. Age showed in every lineament of the fabrics. Wrinkles had become ridges. From the crown of his head to the sole of his feet the boy and the clothes looked as if they were one solid piece, undivided and inseparable. It did not seem as if the garments had ever been off of him since they were fitted to him. This was early in the morning, but they appeared no different late last night, nor will they look different late to-night. It must have required time to have given the shoes and the stockings, and the pants and the jacket, that appearance of eternal rest and rust which envelops them. Did he take them off last night, and put them on fresh this morning ? Impossible ! He could not have removed and returned them again without their showing in some particular that they had been disturbed. *But they do not show it.* The rust, the dirt, the

caking, the wrinkles, and the mossy repose are the same to-day as they were yesterday, and as they will be to-morrow. And yet they do not look as if he had been abed in them. We know he never undresses. Must we believe that he never sleeps?

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#### A PAIR OF MORTIFYING BREECHES.

IT was Monday morning, the first day of school. He was on his way there with a companion. He wore blue breeches. A most startling blue they were,—not this navy blue so common to clothes, but a light dazzling blue, seen only in those toys made up for the enjoyment of young folks. These breeches fitted close to his fat limbs. They were very beautiful, and added largely to the scenery of White Street as he bounded along that picturesque avenue. We never saw such breeches as these in all our long and active life. The color was so bright, the fit so snug, that to see them was to soothe and nourish the mind. He and his companion were “chasing,”—that is, they were running without any particular object in view. It was the exuberance of youth that sent their legs flying. He wore a coat with tails, and every time his legs flew up the tails flew up, and the blue fairly filled the air. The beauty of the scene was almost suffocating. It must have been a great

joy to the other boy to be with him. Pretty soon they came upon a party of other boys somewhat younger than they, and one of these—a very depraved nature he must have had—derisively yelled out,—

“Blue breeches! Oh, blue breeches! Ki, yi!  
See blue breeches!”

It was an awful blow. The owner of the cerulean garment lost the color in his face, and it was only by a mighty effort that he summoned the strength to appear indifferent. It was no use.

“Ho, ho, ho! Look at the blue breeches!” again shouted the offender.

Like a flash, the wearer of the adornment rushed upon him to crush him into the earth. It was a fatal move.

“Blue breeches, blue breeches!” screamed another miscreant.

He turned upon the second offender.

It was a feeling of mutual defence that prompted another to take up the cry, and then a fourth, and so on.

He went at one only to be called to another, and the air fairly quivered with the cry which now became a roar. He was about wild with the din,—

“Blue breeches! blue breeches! blue breeches!”

It was no use to fight them. They were like wasps. The bombardment was so terrible that *he was glad to beat an ignominious retreat, and*

the once proud garment disappeared in humiliating flight.

Poor boy! He may be obliged to wear those breeches for months, to suffer day by day a torture worse than death. How can parents be so cruel? How can they, when the spring has come, the tender buds are opening, and the songs of the birds fill the air with sweet melody, put on the dye-kettle and color a pair of breeches like that?

It is simply infernal.

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#### THE BOY AT CHURCH.

MR. AND MRS. PRYDEN took their little boy to church Sunday. It was his first day in pants, and his first time in church. For the first half of the service he was fully absorbed in things about him, and the novelty of the situation. After that his mind turned in upon himself, and he began to pay exclusive attention to his own wants, and Mr. and Mrs. Pryden, from an exulting feeling of pride, gradually slipped down an inclined plane of anxiety which emptied into an abyss of despair. The number of positions the youth got into, and the wants he manifested, would seem incredible were they not actually witnessed by a full score of respectable people. As soon as he took in a real-

izing sense of his own identity, Master Pryden began to comprehend and respond to the demands of his nature. He got upon his knees on the seat, and stared at the choir. He twisted back again to the front, and was only saved from falling to the floor by the alertness of his pa. The floor being thus suggested to him, he got down on it. Then he got up on the seat again. From this place he desired to change to a position between his pa and ma. He was accommodated. After resting quietly there for twenty seconds, he changed to the other side of his pa. Thence he moved to his pa's lap. From there he went to the other side of his ma. This was evidently a mistake, for he immediately expressed a wish to get back to the other side of his pa, and on their attempting to lift him there he kicked and cried, and was only silenced by being allowed to walk the distance, which he did at once. The motion so pleased him that he went straightway back again, and tried it over. Also for the second and third time. Then he got up again between his ma and pa. After that, to the other side of his pa. Then he espied a gilt-backed book in the rack of the next pew, and, reaching over to get it, came within an ace of depositing his entire carcass on the other side, but was clutched in time by both of his parents, and hauled safely back, very red in the face and very indignant. Disappointed in this venture, he turned his attention to the rack *in his own pew*, and possessed himself of the

books therein, which, being taken away from him, made it necessary that he should get them again. These he dropped on the floor one at a time, and smiled the guileless smile of infancy as they were picked up by his embarrassed parents. Pretty well exhausted, he now prepared for sleep, and rested his head upon his mother's breast and closed his eyes. His parents sighed. Then he slipped down on the floor, sliding in such a way as to leave quite an expanse of white goods between his pants and jacket, and to roll the collar of the jacket up on the back of his head. The clothing was adjusted, his ma whispered in his ear for the fortieth time, and his pa scowled so hard as to nearly dislodge his own scalp. He saw the scowl, and sullenly sank down on the floor, from which he had to be lifted by main force. Then he took out the hymn-books again, and was going to drop them as before, when his pa interfered and rescued them. He resented the liberty by throwing back his head, which, coming in sharp contact with the back of the seat, wrenched from his lips a shrill cry. The unhappy mother endeavored to stifle in her shawl so much of the wail she could not whisper away, while his pa's face was full of great drops of perspiration, of which pa himself was unconscious. The wail not abating, pa's knife, containing four blades, was brought into service, and then the cry hushed. For a full moment he was absorbed in contemplation of this object. And then he let it drop. There was no

carpet in the pew. Two thirds of the congregation raised from their seats, and Mr. Pryden himself came almost to a perpendicular. Then the hymn was given out and sung, and the benediction pronounced, and Mr. and Mrs. Pryden, with their heir between them, started for home, Mr. Pryden being so warm that he took off his overcoat, and gave a boy ten cents to carry it home for him.

## THE MAN NEXT DOOR,. AND OTHER ESSAYS.

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### No. 1.—A NEW ENGLAND THANKSGIVING.

To-MORROW is Thanksgiving day, and as I sit by my window looking out into the yard of The Man Next Door, I wonder to myself how he will celebrate the day; and my mind running out to him from the contemplation of a series of papers I have been wanting for some time to prepare for you, on a variety of topics connected with life in our village, it is suggested to me that a good name for the papers will be the name by which he is more familiarly known in our household, viz., "The Man Next Door." One reason, perhaps, for this designation of him is the fact that he is the only man who lives next door to us, a street being on the other side of us. Again, his name is so awkward that it does not come easy to speak. So he has come to be known principally in my family as The Man Next Door. And a very good man he is, too, although a queer man in some respects.

The Man Next Door has a store, in which he sells music, books, stationery, jewelry, watches, clocks, etc. He is a sort of genius whose brain, like his place of business, is adapted to various ramifications. He is a large man, with a beard on his face, but none on the top of his head. He is more nerve than fat, large as he is, and as "touchy" as powder itself, and as quickly over it. He is a reformer, a man of powerful but clouded intellect, and a conceiver of vast enterprises, and keeps a retail store of various branches. I don't know that he ever thought out any great thing to a clear conclusion, but he has thought over many of them, and I have come to believe that the little petty details of his business and domestic life have chafed his mighty spirit until it is as sore as a boil; and this is what makes him so "touchy."

Yesterday afternoon his boy brought up with the horse two or three boxes, and dumped them in the yard by the barn. I have just been looking from my window at these boxes. I know they are to be used in building something to-morrow, for The Man Next Door is one of that great majority of New-Englanders who devote religious days to "puttering about the place," as my wife calls it.

Last year he built a house for his boy's dog. It was a clear, cold day, as is proper for a Thanksgiving day to be. I sat indoors and watched him at his work, from my window.

It was about nine A. M. when he began. At that hour my wife directed my attention to the fact

that something was going on next door, and I went to the window. The man, with a hammer in his hand, was there, and so, also, were the boy and the dog. The boy is about fourteen years old, small for his age, with a face so white as to lead the casual observer to infer that he is an invalid. But he is n't. Not by a long sight. He got the dog the day before. The animal was a shaggy-haired dog, that incessantly wagged its tail, and crouched low to the ground when spoken to, and turned over on its back when patted. It was a very propitiatory dog.

The Man Next Door was in the best of spirits. He patted the dog, and laughed, and his whole expression was one of great satisfaction. He had a hammer, and a saw, and a saucer of nails. It was the regular family collection of nails,—four straight ones and forty crooked ones.

He had plenty of material for the building of the dog-house. There were two dry-goods boxes, just such boxes as his boy brought up yesterday. He knocked them apart, and was careful in doing it to save the nails. After he had got the pieces thus separated, he began to lay out the plan for the house. It was going to be quite an elaborate affair, judging from the care with which he shut one eye, and the number of times he stepped back and looked at the idea. Once, when he stepped back, he stepped on the dog, and the dog yelped and verged so suddenly and so unexpectedly that The Man Next Door lost his balance, and abruptly

sat down on the saucer of nails. He got up without smiling, and mechanically looked around for the dog, with the hammer still in his hand. The dog had continued to verge, however, and was now out of sight, the boy being in sympathetic pursuit. Pretty soon The Man Next Door ceased to rub himself, and returned to the work of construction. He worked vigorously. He drove four stakes into the earth, and built up four walls to them. He called for his wife, and she came out ostensibly to hold the boards as he nailed them, but really to tell him how to do it. He knew how to do it himself, however, and lost no time in convincing her of the fact. Still she did n't let go of her idea. She held two boards for him, and was holding the third, when a carriage drove by, in which was a woman that had on a new kind of dolman. The wife of The Man Next Door was so startled by this appearance, which must have been entirely unexpected to her, that she dropped the end of the board she was holding to run out to the other side of the house, where a much better view could be obtained. It was an unfortunate time to select for the purpose. He had a nail partly set, and was about to give it a climaxing blow—in fact the hammer was already descending—when she dropped her end.

I was n't exactly where I could see the whole performance. I saw the hammer go down, however, and then I saw it some thirty feet in the air *travelling in a circle*, and The Man Next Door

was bending over and straightening up again, and holding on to one hand as if it was all he had on earth.

I could see by the movement of her eyes that she was talking to him, and I looked at his lips to see if they were moving in response, but they were not. They were tightly clinched ; and after he had kicked down what he had built up, and jumped up and down on the saucer of nails until he had driven them into the earth, he went into the house.

Later in the day my wife saw his wife, and asked her what was the matter. She said her husband hit his thumb with the hammer, and that he ought not to drive nails anyway, because he did n't understand how to do it.

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#### No. 2. — HOW FAR TWENTY CENTS WILL GO.

THE wife of The Man Next Door has a fertile brain, which is kept actively employed in a variety of directions. Among her household gods are a dozen plants in pots, and a variety of these in a box mounted on a pedestal. The box she got at the store ; the pedestal she and the boy together made. After it was done, she wanted it painted.

She might have sent it to the painter for that purpose, but he would charge more than it was worth. To save the extra cost she determined to do the work herself. She could get a pound of

paint, all mixed in a pot, with a brush, for twenty cents, — the pot and brush to be returned after the work was done. It was a simple thing to paint, and she could put it on as easily and nicely as a trained hand could do it. The Man Next Door did n't think much about it. It was not in his line, but he got the paint.

The paint was green, and when the box and pedestal took that color, and the vines got to growing, the effect was going to be real nice. He brought up the pot of paint on coming to dinner, and she did the painting in the afternoon. It was a great surprise to the wife of The Man Next Door to see how little of the paint was required to color the box and pedestal, and how much was left after the work was done. What should she do with it? Not return it, of course, for she would not be allowed anything for it. Now that she had it she might as well use it. There was undoubtedly something it could be used on.

She looked around for the object in question, and was not long in finding it. There are more or less dingy, battered articles about a house which a coat of paint would improve. Her house was no exception. Her eye lighted on a box holding her scouring-sand. In a few moments it was a delightful green.

Then she looked around for other fields to conquer, and presently found them, and continued to *find them as long as the presence of paint made*

it necessary to search for them. She was nearly the whole afternoon using up that pot of paint, but it was time well employed.

And it was amazing, as she admitted to herself, how far twenty cents' worth of paint would go, judiciously applied. She knew her husband would be surprised when he came home at night at all she had done.

And he was.

When he observed the green clock-case, and looked at the green paper-rack, and found he had a green writing-desk, and contemplated the green footstool, and saw the green coal-scuttle, and got against the green clothes-horse, he was too full to say a word.

Then he picked up his green bootjack, and when he did that he gave a wild, scared look about the room, sank down in a chair, and found his voice.

He said, "Holy fish-hooks!"

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#### No. 3.—THE GOOD EFFECTS OF A LITTLE COMMON-SENSE.

THE other day, you will remember, it rained in a drizzling sort of way from morning until night, and froze as it fell. The next morning everything, especially back stoops, was covered with ice. One of our neighbors went out early into the back yard with a pan of ashes in his arms.

The instant he stepped from the door upon the stoop that foot flew out from under him in a flash, and he went down the steps with the same foot sticking straight ahead and the other sticking straight out behind, with the pan still in his arms. It was a great wonder he was n't killed ; as it was, he was so fearfully wrenched through the hips that he had to be lifted up and carried into the house, being almost blinded, too, by the ashes. I understand that nearly one hundred persons went off their stoops in a similar unpremeditated way that morning. My wife had no sympathy for these people. She said to me, on hearing of our neighbor's mishap, —

“It will learn him to use his head after this. There was no need at all of his falling off that stoop, and if he had n't been so stupid it would not have happened.”

“It was a stupid performance,” I said, dreamily.

“Of course it was,” she went on. “He knew it rained all day yesterday, and he knew it froze, and he knew that everything was a glare of ice last night, and so it must be this morning. And he ought to have had on rubbers when he went out there, or been careful where he stepped. And if he had done that he would n't have made such a spectacle of himself, and hurt himself so, and be laid up, perhaps, for several days. I have n't myself got any sympathy for him, or for any one that ain't got any more sense than to do that.”

*Upon that my wife went back to the kitchen to*

her work, and I fell to musing upon what she had said. I confess there was some wisdom in it. The spectacle of a hundred people in a New England town—that New England so well known for its hard, sterling sense—sliding off back stoops with pans of ashes in their arms, and screaming and swearing in their rage, is not a pleasant one to contemplate, especially when, as my wife says, the performance could be avoided by the exercise of a little common-sense. And yet how many casualties could be saved by this same exercise! It is not only by stepping from back stoops, but in a hundred matters a little wisdom would—Great heavens, what is that!

It is nearly half an hour since this writing was interrupted at the exclamation, and even now I cannot understand, I can scarcely comprehend, what has happened.

There was a short, sharp scream from a woman. It came from the rear of the house. I went into the kitchen, thence to the back door, and,—well! You would not believe it, but there at the foot of the stoop, struggling to get on her feet, and with an overturned pan of potato parings about her, was my wife.

I stood transfixed by the sight, with all the power of motion gone from me, and while I stared at her she reached her feet, and marched deliberately up the steps, and by me into the house, with the lines of her face drawn tight and hard. *I mechanically followed.*

"How on earth came you down there?" I managed to ask.

"How do you suppose I came there?" she retorted.

"I'm sure you did n't fall there, because you were just talking about that, and you said —"

"For heaven's sake stop your noise," she angrily cried. "You are enough to drive a saint mad with your talk. I fell, and you know I fell, and if you had any gumption about you, or cared for me one bit, you would have shovelled the ice from that stoop an hour ago."

And then she darted out of the room, shutting the door as if it required all her strength to do it, and I came back to this writing, and am trying my best to reconcile the several elements of the situation.

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#### No. 4.—GOING HOME TO REST.

My wife said yesterday she guessed The Man Next Door was sick. She saw him come back from down street about nine o'clock. He was walking slowly, and appeared to be tired and worn out. Knowing him to be of a very nervous temperament, and that he had some severe financial difficulties to contend with in the past month, I supposed he had given up for the time being. Shortly before the dinner hour he came in, and *then I saw he was not feeling well, and spoke to*

him about it. He said he was only tired through want of sleep, and had come home to rest, just as I supposed.

After he said this he laid back in a chair and showed no disposition to talk further. I busied myself about some work I had in hand, and left him to his ease. It was, perhaps, fifteen minutes later when he said, —

“Would you be kind enough to step this way a moment? I think that is my wife sitting there,” pointing to one of his windows opposite; “I am not positive. I would n’t want to swear to it, but it looks very much like her.”

I glanced over there. It was she, plainly enough. He sat and watched her for some moments in silence. Then he exclaimed, as if he had been slowly endeavoring to fathom some intricate maze, —

“It is most extraordinary! It is most astounding!”

“What is that?” I asked.

“I cannot understand it a bit,” he continued, with a sigh. “It is far beyond me. Now just think of it. There is my wife — you can see her for yourself — sitting there as calm and self-possessed as a baby in a spittoon. That was just the way she was sitting when I came home this morning. I feel all played out, as I told you. My head don’t ache, but it feels sort of numb, as if there was n’t any life to it. I came home because I was sick of the sight of the store and everything

belonging to it, and wanted rest. I did n't want to see anybody ; I did n't want to talk ; I did n't want to be interfered with ; I wanted to lay off and think of nothing at all. My wife saw what I wanted, and although I came home for no purpose at all, she prevailed on me to stay and rest myself. Rest was what I wanted, she said, and nowhere could I get it so well as at home ; and when I looked around, and saw how quiet and peaceful it was, I knew she was right. Then she fixed the easy-chair for me, and told me to keep perfectly quiet, and she would n't let any company in, and I 'd be as cosey as a bug in a rug.

“ So I took off my coat, and put on my slippers, and laid back in my chair, and shut my eyes, and just thought of nothing. And, I tell you, it was just as delicious as the first cucumber. I lay there like one dead, you know. I did n't think of anything at all ; I did n't move, I did n't speak. By gracious ! I can't tell when I 've had such a perfect sense of rest as I did then. I felt as if I did n't care if all creation lit out from sight at once, if they did n't disturb me in the going. I laid there like that about fifteen minutes or so, when I thought I heard some one moving I opened my eyes to see. I did n't snap them open, but just let them drift apart, for I felt too lazy to take any interest in the matter anyway. When I got them open enough, I saw my wife standing among the flowers in the bay-window, looking at *them*. *I did n't see anything further than that,*

and hardly that ; and then I kinder drifted off into nothing again. I was glad she was not doing anything, though, because I was so tired that I could not bear to see work going on. It would have tired me to have thought of it even. By and by I heard her walking quick like across the room. I swear, it made me shiver. I opened my eyes ; she was going into the kitchen with a flower-pot in her arms. In a minute she was back again.

“‘What are you doing ?’ I asked.

“‘I ‘m only taking the flowers into the kitchen to wash them,’ says she, ‘but you need n’t mind it,’ says she, ‘because it won’t be in your way, and I ‘ll be through in a few minutes.’

“I did n’t say any more, but I *did* mind it, and I could n’t help it. I could n’t bear to see anybody doing anything ; and then the kitchen door was open, and that made a draft on my legs, and I could n’t go into another room on account of the fire.

“‘I ‘m sorry you ‘re doing it,’ says I.

“‘Why, what’s the harm ?’ says she. ‘You don’t have to do anything, you know,’ says she.

“This was calculated to assure me, but it did n’t. But I tried not to complain, and got as far out of the draft as I could, and close up to the stove. But it broke me up for a few minutes.

“I ‘d got partly quieted down, when I heard her say, —

“‘Oh, dear !’

“I looked up before I thought, and saw her

trying to take down a pot from the bracket, where it was too high for her to reach. She looked over to me, and kind of shamed like, said, says she,—

“ ‘I wish you would reach that for me. I know you are tired,’ says she, ‘but I can’t get it, and if you’ll only reach it,’ says she, ‘I won’t bother you again,’ says she.

“ I did n’t want to get up, for I hated awfully to move, but I did n’t see any help for it. I thought it would n’t do to say nothing, for then she would think it was making no sacrifice, so I said it was too bad a man could n’t come home and rest without the whole place being turned topsyturvy about his ears, and be dragged off to do this and that when he did n’t feel able to move.

“ What on earth induced her to go to work at those plants just then is one of those mysteries that I cannot explain, and I swear I don’t believe she can. That pot I got down was the beginning of the evil. She wanted to know, as long as I was up, if I would n’t lift a big geranium in the kitchen, as it was too much for her. No sooner had I done that than there were two more pots for me to lift, and when I had carried them out, there was another to take down from the bracket; and in less than five minutes she had me carrying unwashed pots into the kitchen, and wet pots and dripping plants back into the room. Then she asked me to lift them into their places, and wanted to know if I would n’t tack the ivy in the arch, *and go down cellar after a board for a bench.*

And there was the table and chair full of wet pots, and the floor littered with dead leaves and twigs, with the air full of damp and draughts. And she had her sleeves rolled up, an old dress on, and the whole front was wet with the water that had splashed on, and begrimed with the dirt from the pots. Such a wretched, dismal, distressing state of things no man ever looked on, and I had come home so tired and exhausted I did n't care to live another minute! I had come home to find peace, quiet, and rest! I, her own husband! And there she sits, as serene and composed as an angel in Paradise. By heaven," he cried, "it is most extraordinary."

Then after a moment he impressively added, —

"If you are ever tired and worn out, and feel as if you must have rest and quiet or die, don't go home. Go to some political caucus, or a boiler factory where they are working over-time, or sit down under a railroad bridge where extra trains are being run. But don't go home. God bless you. Good day."

And he went back to his store.

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#### No. 5.—THE FASCINATION OF AN ILL WIND.

ONE of the precious enjoyments of this life is startling people. Bad news travels fast, because everybody helps it along. Sidney Smith says that next to the pleasure of telling evil news is

hearing it. Again, there is no disappointment keener than that of being cheated out of a morsel of shocking news, — to have it snatched from your possession just as you are getting ready to roll it under your tongue. Some people think a paper does n't amount to anything if it does not contain an announcement of the death of an acquaintance. And when we are suitably shocked by a dreadful happening to a neighbor, to learn that the story is untrue, — well, it is very gratifying, without doubt.

The story they tell of Coleridge, aptly illustrates the general weakness. He was busy with his writing at a late hour in the night, when the cry of fire startled him. Opening the window he hallooed to a passer-by to learn where the fire was, and was told that it was a shoemaker's shop, and that the shoemaker's family were burned up. Inexpressibly shocked by the news, and full of sympathy for the unfortunate man, he put on his coat and ran with all his speed to the scene of the horror. When he got there, and saw the shoemaker's family, unharmed, sitting on their goods in the street, and learned the story was false, he impulsively said, "D—n the fire!" and went back home.

There is an ecstasy of delight in imparting startling news of an evil nature. We try to conceal it; we make herculean efforts to carry the treasure about and distribute it calmly and dispassionately, but we fail. If it is very bad news, and concerns *some neighbor*, we are very much shocked, of

course. Still we are kind of grateful to heaven for being permitted to be the first to tell the wretched affair.

I started out to speak of Mr. Henderson. It was a shocking accident. His horse ran away with him, and he was thrown to the ground and instantly killed. This occurred in the morning. Mr. A, who is an irrepressible man, heard the news almost as soon as it occurred, and started off up the street, all in a tremble, to tell it.

The first man he met was B. He said, making a tremendous effort to keep calm, —

“Good morning, Mr. B.”

“Good morning,” said Mr. B.

“You know Henderson, don’t you?”

“What, the grocer?”

“Yes.”

“Yes, I know him well.”

“He was thrown out of his wagon a few minutes ago, and killed.”

“What, killed?”

“Yes. Head all smashed in.”

“Why, that is horrible!”

“Yes, indeed, it is dreadful.”

Mr. B would ask more particulars, but while he is recovering from the excitement the intelligence throws him into, Mr. A hurries on his disastrous way.

In a few yards he meets C.

“Good morning, Mr. C.”

“Good morning, Mr. A.”

"You know Henderson, don't you?"

"The grocer, you mean?"

"Yes."

"Guess I do know him. What of it?"

"He was thrown out of his wagon a little while ago, and was killed."

"Great heavens! you don't mean it?" gasps C.

"It's so. Head was all smashed in," adds Mr. A, as composedly as if smashed heads were the commonest of occurrences. And then he hurries on. Mrs. D was coming out of the market with a parcel of meat as he was passing. He hailed her at once.

"Good morning, Mrs. D."

"Good morning, Mr. A."

"You know Henderson, the grocer, don't you?"

"Indeed I do. Many is the dollar's worth I've traded with him. Yes, I know Mr. Henderson."

"He was thrown out of his wagon only a few minutes ago, and was killed," said Mr. A, watching her face for the effect, and feeling his heart thrill at the look of horror that overspread it.

"Mercy on us, Killed, do you say?"

"Yes, killed at once. Head all stove in."

"Why, this is horrible. I must hurry home and tell the folks!" she exclaimed.

As Mrs. D lives in Mr. A's neighborhood, this announcement alarms him. It won't do to have her get ahead of him with the dreadful intelligence. He quickens his pace to almost a trot. *Full of eager expectation, he hurries on. Shortly*

he overtakes Mr. E. He comes up to him rather short of breath.

“Good morning, Mr. E.”

“Good mornin’,” responds E.

“You know Henderson?”

“Yes, I knowed him well.”

Mr. A looks sideways at Mr. E’s face for the result, and says,—

“He was throwed out of his wagon just now, and killed.”

“Yes, I heard so,” gently says Mr. E. “It was an awful affair.”

Mr. A is so shocked by this anticipation of his news that he fails to confirm Mr. E’s opinion, and hurries on, somewhat sobered.

Presently he saw Mr. F coming out of his door. His spirits raised again, and he hastened ahead, diving into Mr. F’s yard, and reaching the stoop as that gentleman was leaving it. Mr. F is a very stolid man, with mind principally upon his business interests.

“Good morning, Mr. F,” cried Mr. A, nearly out of breath.

“Mornin’,” responded F.

“You know Mr. Henderson?” interrogates A, with the air of a man who is approaching a sweeping victory.

“What Henderson?”

Mr. A’s heart felt as if some one had stepped on it.

“Why,—why, the grocer, you know.”

“Don’t know him. What of it?”

“He’s — he’s dead,” gasped A, feeling some way or other very small and uncomfortable.

“Relative of yours?”

“No, oh, no!” answered A, wishing that he was well out the yard.

“Anything else you want to say to me?”

Mr. A did want to tell him that Mr. Henderson had his head smashed in; but the fact had now grown so insignificant that he did n’t have the heart to mention it, and was only too glad to confess that there was nothing more, and make his escape.

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#### No. 6.—THE THEOLOGY OF A SHIRT-BUTTON.

DEACON STOUGHTON is one of my neighbors. The deacon is a magnificent specimen of what a great many people believe a deacon should be. He is straight and stiff and thin. Come to think it over, I don’t believe I ever saw a real fat, chunky deacon, although I believe they are picking up in this particular throughout the country, and that there is a growing belief that more meat on their bones would not seriously interfere with their filling the office. Deacon Stoughton is thin, and built just right for visiting people in an official capacity, as his body, you can see at a glance, would be perfectly at home in a straight-backed, weak-legged chair. The deacon has no color in

his face. Color is too suggestive of good living and good digestion, neither of which would become a deacon. The deacon's clothes are as void of levity as his face and form, and must be a great comfort to him. They are black, so far as the outer garments are concerned, and as austere as a hearse. His linen is as white as his coat is black. It is of his linen that I now wish to speak particularly.

Last Sunday morning the deacon changed his shirt, as is his custom. On buttoning it at the back (for he has made a concession in favor of the open-backed article) he discovered that the button was off. There was no other shirt available at the time, and the deacon was in a fix.

When his wife learned the trouble, she briskly said that she would sew on a button at once. This announcement nearly threw the deacon into a fit. As it was, he was petrified with horror. It was Sunday, the day set apart for rest and meditation, wherein should be performed no worldly labor, and here was a woman, the wife of a deacon, unblushingly proposing to get out her work-basket and other carnal matters, and sew on that button. It seemed incredible. He wanted to believe it was but the offshoot of a disordered fancy, which would dissolve into space when he awoke. But it was an actual fact, distasteful as it was to admit it, and the deacon was forced to believe that his wife had really proposed the sacrilege.

Aside from the offence of the act, it was mortifying to the deacon's pride that his wife, who had enjoyed so many years of his edifying example, had profited so little by it. It was painfully evident that there was a very large screw loose somewhere in the moral fabric he had been rearing.

When he got his breath, and had in a measure regained his ordinary composure, he declined the shirt-button, and rebuked her who had suggested it. There was plenty of time in the six days of the week to sew on buttons without desecrating the seventh with that service. He hoped he knew his duty, and as long as he retained his reason he would never be guilty of such a sin.

A highly respectable pin was made to hold the shirt together and the collar in its place, and the deacon went to church, very much pleased with his own righteousness, however he may have felt in regard to his wife's. At any rate, his firmness in the right must have a salutary effect upon her, acting somewhat in the nature of a moral astringent upon her loose idea of rectitude.

But a pin is not always a good substitute for a button, however useful it may be in other ways, or however good may have been its intentions in this. The deacon's pin was moral, but restless. This last quality began to manifest itself seriously before the sermon had fairly started. The point got into his flesh and smarted. Not severely, to be sure, but in a small manner that was exceedingly annoying, and sufficient in itself to draw his

attention from the discourse, despite his desperate endeavors to keep his mind upon it.

A pin is a very trifling affair, to be sure, but it succeeded in completely filling the deacon's thoughts before the sermon was done, and the various things he thought of in regard to that pin would have astonished and pained him beyond measure had he seen them mirrored in another's mind.

After the service several sought to engage him in pleasant and edifying converse on church work, but the pin had the upper hand, and the answers of the deacon were so unusual, and his lack of sympathy was so manifest, that the brethren abandoned their efforts, and retired with grave forebodings.

In the Sunday school, where he serves as superintendent, nothing went smoothly that noon. He thought his officials were never so stupid, the teachers never so negligent, the scholars never so noisy and ungodly generally, as they were then, and he had to speak in severe rebuke to a number of them.

But it was not the deacon who was doing this. It was that pin, that highly respectable pin. When he was asked by the collector what amount he was going to give this year for foreign missions, the pin spoke up at once, and said it guessed enough had been done for the heathen already, and that it was about time they looked after themselves. The collector, who did not see the pin, thought

it was the deacon who spoke, and went away half stunned.

It was the pin that answered a call to visit a sick neighbor with the remark that he had something else to do. It was the pin that forbade books being given out to the school that day, because the children were unruly, and should be punished. It was the pin that caused him to meet pleasant salutations with such stiffness as to disperse the sunshine from the faces he met. It was the pin that made him stalk home in advance of his wife, and leave her to get there alone. And it was the pin that showed him how cold was his dining-room, how late was his dinner, how unfeeling and irreverent were his children, how much that was disatisfying and uncomfortable and annoying all about him.

Despite its pretensions, that pin was almost as wicked as a button would have been in its place, and the deacon was glad indeed when Monday came, and the button could return without sin.

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No. 7.—MR. FERGUSON'S GRAVEYARD.

AN old gentleman named Hutchings, who lives in Hudson, N. Y., was at my house the other evening. He was full of reminiscences of the past of our village, and told many interesting stories. One of them I have thought best to preserve in this column, as a picture of a phase of human

weakness that is not, I am thankful to say, common.

The time of the incident was the building of our railroad, some twenty years ago. A man named Ferguson lived then in Perkinstown, on the route. He was a farmer, and owned a piece of land in a ravine through which the road was to run. This piece was so situated that the company could not avoid crossing it with their line, unless making a turn at a very great expense. There was scarcely a half-acre in the piece, and it was a mass of rocks. It might have been worth to the company about forty dollars. If any one else had offered twenty-five dollars for it, the Perkinstowners would have thought that he was going to put up an asylum for the insane, and stock it himself.

The commissioner who was instructed to deal with Mr. Ferguson made him the liberal offer of fifty dollars for the land. Mr. Ferguson declined it. He had his own ideas of the matter. Railroads were not common. They did not even come once a year, and it was very reasonable to believe that another would not take in Perkinstown during Mr. Ferguson's lifetime. It was his idea to make the most of this one.

Mr. Ferguson said he would see the commissioner the next day. He wanted to sleep on the matter over night. But he didn't sleep much that night. Mrs. Ferguson was dead. She had been dead a couple of years or thereabouts. She

had been a sickly woman for the last years of her life, and not exactly a helpmeet to Mr. Ferguson, who had been obliged to hire a woman to do the work that would have otherwise been done by the late lamented. Mr. Ferguson fell to thinking of that while brooding over the railroad matter, and looking out of his kitchen window upon the clump of peach-trees beneath which reposed his dead wife.

The result of his ruminations was that "Martha would 'a' done better if she'd had the chance; but she was n't able." He believed that an opportunity for her to be useful had now arrived, and knowing well her willing disposition, he felt it would be a downright favor to her to put her in the way of using the chance.

That night, with the aid of his hired man, he dug her up and transplanted her on the rocky bit of land in the ravine. Then he was ready for the commissioner when that individual appeared.

He told the commissioner that he had been thinking of the matter very carefully, weighed all the phases of it, and he had come to the conclusion that he could not give up that piece of land for less than a thousand dollars. The shock was so great to the commissioner that he fell over in his chair, and the place where his head struck the door jamb was shown for years after. When he got his feet and his breath, he told Mr. Ferguson that the demand was preposterous, that the company would not entertain it for an instant, that

fifty dollars was a tremendous price for the piece.

"I admit," said Mr. Ferguson, gently, "that fifty dollars is a good price for an ordinary piece of land like that, but this is a far different case. That is a private graveyard, and that makes a great difference."

"A graveyard! What's buried there?" bluntly inquired the incredulous commissioner.

"My wife, sir," gravely answered Mr. Ferguson, "my late lamented and dearly beloved wife lies resting there." And Mr. Ferguson wiped from his eyes a moisture that did credit to his heart. "My long-suffering wife's remains repose in that spot."

"Why, I did not know that," said the somewhat bewildered railroad man.

"It is a fact, sir. I laid her in that retired spot because she loved it so much. Her last words to me were, 'Husband, bury me there!' I did. Her wish was sacred to me. That spot is sacred to me. The railroad cannot run over her poor body. I should have to move her if the company take the land. It is not a pleasant matter to disturb the dead. You are a husband yourself, perhaps. You can understand this, sir."

The commissioner said he was not prepared to deal with the question in this new light, and would have to consult the company; with that he retired.

Before negotiations were renewed the affair came to the knowledge of the neighbors, and they started up such an uproar about Mr. Ferguson's

ears, that that bereaved man took up his wife, and put her back under the peach-trees without charging the railroad company a cent.

And yet when they came to settle for the land, that ungrateful company would not allow him but thirty dollars for it, and he had to take it.

Truly, corporations have no souls.

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#### No. 8.—THE VALUE OF STYLE.

IT is a little singular that however many styles of hats a man may buy, any one of them will do on a pinch. It is different with the other sex. A hat must be in the style, and the style must be clearly defined, or the hat itself cannot be worn. This matter has come to me in a vague form for several years, but on Saturday night it was brought very vividly to my notice. Miss Houniker, of our street, is a vivacious young lady and a friendly neighbor. She came in to see my wife last Saturday night. I was in the next room, grating horseradish. I overheard a conversation between the two which opened my eyes considerably, and furnished me with an explanation of some things I had not before understood.

The Sunday before I was surprised to hear my wife say she was not going to church. Pressing her for an explanation, I learned that her hat was out of style.

“But I thought,” I said, “that you got a hat but a few weeks ago.”

She admitted this, but that was a fall hat. This set me to thinking, but not in a definite way. I said, rather bewildered, "What does that matter? You wore it last Sunday."

"I know I did," she answered.

"Well, then," I added, still in the dark, and getting further into the mire, "what is to hinder your wearing it to-day?"

"Because it ain't in the style," she answered.

"But, great heavens!" I answered, "if one week ago it was all right, what is to hinder it from being all right to-day?"

Then she burst into tears, and I dropped the matter.

The conversation between her and Miss Houniker, Saturday night, was in regard to attending a sociable on the Wednesday evening of this week. My wife did not know certainly whether she could go. Miss Houniker was sure she could not go. The reason, mainly, that led Miss Houniker to this conclusion was that while her silk was a brown — the silk she designed to wear — her hat was gray. My wife could not go, also. Her hat was an autumn hat, full as warm to the head as could be a winter hat. But it was an autumn hat, and she felt that it was not right for a Christian, one who belonged to the church, and tried to be regular, to wear a hat in the winter that was especially designed for the fall. She didn't think the angels in heaven would approve of that.

She did not say so, of course, but I knew that must be the feeling by the way she spoke.

I am sorry for the angels in heaven.

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#### No. 9 — AN UNEXPECTED ARGUMENT.

THE Man Next Door and his wife were in to see us last evening. He came in to show me some chilblains he had on his heel. She came in to bear him company, I presume.

While he and I were engaged in discussing his heel, she and my wife fell into a conversation on the subject of servants. When the chilblains lightened up somewhat in its pressure on my attention, I was enabled to learn that she was deplored the general inefficiency of servants. One of her original remarks was to the effect that it was more of a task to look after a girl than it was to do the work herself. In a spirit of self-sacrifice which cannot be too greatly regretted, she persisted in keeping the girl.

The Man Next Door has one child, a boy. This makes a family of three. She has a girl to help her do the work, and, as I gleaned from her remarks, even then had difficulty in getting through on time, and was all fagged out when night came. Her husband caught upon her subject after a while, and drifted into it. Presently he said, speaking more particularly to me, —

“Blamed if I understand this business. Here

a couple get married, and go to keeping house. After they've got a child the woman must have a girl. She can't go along after that without help. She must have a girl, even if she goes without something else. I don't understand it at all, unless the sex have mightily changed in the past thirty years, and have grown considerably weaker. Thirty years ago you did n't hear of such things. There were eight of us in our family, and mother did all the work for the entire lot, and did n't seem to be put out much by it either. And then I remember the families in our neighborhood, when I was a boy, a number of them that had several children apiece, and the women did the work. They may have had the washing done, something like that, but the work itself they tended to themselves. But nowadays, as soon as a child has come, then the work must be done by a girl. Women ain't what they were thirty years ago, by a long shot."

"What if there were eight of your family, they were n't all little children, were they?" put in his wife.

"No, but three or four of them were small."

I was wondering what his wife would say to this, and was confident it would be some sort of feminine logic which did n't apply to the case.

"A man knows a great deal about a woman's work," she said. I laughed inwardly. "A woman," she continued, "did n't have half so much to attend to thirty years ago that she has now."

"Did n't, hey? What 's the reason, I 'd like to know. Ain't a family of eight as much work as a family of three?" he asked.

"Yes, and more, but not as things were done then. I remember your house well. There was a kitchen and a parlor. There was no dining-room to keep in order, nor any sitting-room. The parlor was shut up all the week, and rarely opened only when it was dusted. There was a recess off from the kitchen where your mother slept, and the bed just filled that, so there was no room there to sweep, with a dresser and toilet stand to keep in order. Up stairs there were two bedrooms and a store-room. Both of them were plain and uncarpeted. Really there were but three rooms in the house to keep in order."

"Well, I don't see as that makes so much difference," said The Man Next Door, in a slightly faltering voice.

"If you did the work you 'd see it quick enough. A family in the same circumstances, nowadays, has a kitchen (carpeted at that), dining-room, and parlor, and perhaps a sitting-room, too. All these rooms are well furnished with a variety of knick-knacks that would not have been in use thirty years ago, and to keep them in order requires considerable care. Then there is scarcely a week but that the parlor is occupied, and every time it is used it has to be swept, and everything in it dusted. Then there are one or more bedrooms, nicely furnished, and requiring work to keep them

looking decent. The five or six rooms in constant use by the family nowadays require more than double the work to take care of them than did the same number of rooms thirty years ago. Then there is the visiting. That of itself is a far greater item than it was when you lived at home. When I was a girl at home, mother used to think she was sufficiently dressed with a clean calico on in the afternoon. She sat in the kitchen, and there did her sewing, when she got through the other work; and if a neighbor came in, no change was made. Now the fashion is to make calls, and you have got to make them and receive them,—not in the kitchen, in a calico dress, but in the parlor, or sitting-room, and in a company dress. No woman can go around in a calico dress in the afternoon. She must be dressed, either to receive her visitors or to make return calls, and all that takes time. I guess you 'll find that a woman now, who has a family, has far more to do than the woman of thirty years ago."

"Come on, if you 're going home," said The Man Next Door, as he got up and reached for his hat.

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#### No. 10.—CHARITY AND THE MULTITUDE.

ONE of my neighbors is an elderly lady. She and I go to the same church. She is an active member,—active in feeling, at any rate, as her sympathies are with the church's various projects

and its condition. Near to her lives a woman with whom she has been at variance for some time. They were once close friends, each making as free in the house of the other as in her own, as is quite frequently the case between congenial neighbors in a small village like ours. It was a very convenient condition of affairs, too, on numerous occasions, when one family ran short of some article of culinary use, and had no opportunity to send to the store. Thus, in the course of several years, many cups of milk, and drawings of tea, and lumps of butter and the like, passed to and fro.

But this came to an end after a while, and domestic and social interchange was dropped, and dropped with sufficient force to smash it.

But that is not what I started out to write about.

I was in the old lady's house yesterday afternoon on an errand, and after the transaction of the matter she asked me if I was at church Sunday. I told her I was not; a very severe cold had kept me at home.

"You had oughter been there," she went on to observe. "You missed one of the best sermons you ever heard. It was a powerful one, I can tell you. It was the gospel clean through. I don't think I ever knowed Mr. Highdecker to do so well as he did Sunday."

"I am glad to hear you were so well pleased with the sermon; what was it about?" I asked.

"It was about charity, and I tell you he just give it to 'em. His text he took from Paul, where Paul says that if a man does this or that, or whatever he does, or how good it may be, yet if there ain't charity in his heart, all the good he does don't amount to a row of pins. I've been thinking of it all the week, and I tell you them are the sermons that count that keep you a-thinking of 'em. Them things you hear so much about in the pulpits nowadays—all about science and such folderol—go in one ear and out of the other, and you'd better heard nothing at all in the first place. That's just what I think about it."

I fully agreed with my friend on this head, and then asked her what sort of point Mr. Highdecker had made of the text.

"He went on to say," she continued, "that there was too much talk, and too little done in the way of charity. And I could see who he was slapping there. He said that thinking good, and then doing nothing to bring it about, did n't amount to anything, and of course it don't. He said that we'd better not think good at all if we was agoing to let it stop right there. I never thought of it in that light, but I can see that he is right; for, as he said, if we think we will do something for somebody, or if we feel real sorry for somebody, and don't go and act on it, we just weaken ourselves, and ain't done a mite of good to anybody."

The old lady paused and sighed, and presently continued, as the tears filled her eyes, —

“ He talked so beautifully of our love for each other, how patient we should be, how much of suffering there was in the hearts of people, how much of good there was in those about us if we’d only take the trouble to find it out, but we go on our own way, wrapped up in self, and never take notice of the aches, and trials, and burdens all around us. I could n’t keep from crying all the while he was talking, I felt so bad, and all the week I ’ve been thinking it over. I tell you we ain’t got charity enough for other folks, we ain’t patient enough, we don’t have the sympathy we had oughter ; we just go right along thinking the very worst of them, when all the time they may be enduring things that would make us no better than they are.”

The old lady wiped her eyes, and turned them to the window.

“ Just see that brazen-faced hussy ! ” she suddenly and unexpectedly exclaimed.

And looking hastily through the window, I was in time to see the offending neighbor go by.

“ If there ’s a body I despise on this earth,” energetically observed Mr. Highdecker’s admirer, “ it is that bold-faced thing.”

I then withdrew.

## No. 11.—ENUMERATING CHICKENS.

MR. AND MRS. POTTS live on our street. They are a young married couple; that is, they have been married but seven or eight years.

Mr. Potts is a workman in our only factory. He is a very good mechanic, and as such has his aspirations to better himself. Mrs. Potts is an ordinary woman, somewhat fond of making what show is possible with the means she has at her command.

A short time ago he invested with a fellow-workman in a lottery. The prize he had set his heart on was of the value of \$10,000. By drawing this he would come into one half of it, which would be \$5,000.

With so much money as that there was no end to the things he could accomplish. He told his wife about it, and they had a long talk over the future as this amount was to shape it. In the mean time they both built their own plans for the disposal of the amount,—the chief of these was a house of their own. They picked out a desirable lot in the village, on one of the best streets, and drew plans of the style of house they would put up. Twice they walked over to the lot, and carefully examined it in the moonlight.

The night before they were to receive the results of the drawing they harmonized on a plan

for the house, and got it satisfactorily furnished throughout, with the exception of the sitting-room and parlor.

She said nothing but a Brussels carpet would do for the floors of those apartments. He believed three-ply ingrain would look fully as well, besides being much cheaper. He could n't put all the money in the house. He wanted some to spare for several mechanical experiments he had in view.

"But ingrain carpets are so common," she interposed.

"The best kinds ain't," he answered. "I saw some the other day that looked just like Brussels. You could n't tell 'em from the real Brussels."

"But they ain't Brussels, and folks would find it out mighty quick."

"What if they did? Are we obliged to put down carpets to suit other people, whether we can afford it or not?" he inquired.

"Afford it! What are you going to do with all the money, then, I'd like to know? And how much more is Brussels carpeting going to cost than first-class ingrain? Twenty-five dollars would cover the whole difference, and I'd like to know how twenty-five dollars could be spent to better advantage. It would make the rooms look fifty dollars better."

"But what's the reason a nice ingrain carpet would not do just as well?" he persisted.

"Because ingrain ain't as stylish as Brussels."

Everybody knows that, and if we are going to have things in style, we have got to have Brussels carpet on those floors. Ingrain would only make fools of the other things."

"I tell you a first-class ingrain carpet is just as well, and, at any rate, there ain't enough difference to amount to twenty-five dollars. Mother had ingrain on her parlor, and if it is good enough for her it is good enough for me."

"I don't care if she did," returned Mrs. Potts; "her house was n't like this, and if she was a mind to put up with an ingrain carpet, that is n't to say that I should."

"She might have had a Brussels if she'd wanted it," he answered back, "but she had some sense about the matter."

"Which means, I suppose, that I've got none," she indiscreetly observed.

"You can take it as you please," was his gruff permission.

"I hope you are polite enough," she said, flushing slightly.

He made no answer. It was that sort of stubborn silence some people fall into on inappropriate occasions.

"There shall be a Brussels carpet in those rooms if I can have anything to say in the matter," she asserted.

"There won't if I know myself," he obstinately responded.

"I would n't be a brute," said she.

"I would n't be a fool," he retorted.

Then she burst into tears, and went off to bed, and he sat there alone brooding over her ill-temper and nursing his own.

What misery may have grown out of this unpleasant affair will never be known, as the prize was drawn by somebody out West, and too far West far a Brussels carpet to go.

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#### No. 12.—MARTHA'S IDEAL.

WHEN I was a boy Martha was twenty years of age. She was an almost constant companion of my sisters, and a very familiar object to me. Martha was peculiar. I did n't know anything about this, but I used to hear my sisters speak of it. I knew she was a quiet girl, and imagined she was somewhat of a dreamer. I believed, without knowing much about it, or reasoning over it, that she was particular. Perhaps her peculiarities arose from her nature to be particular. But that is neither here nor there.

Martha was a dreamer. She had an ideal, not of life, which we all should have, but of a husband; the man who was some time to come to her out of the future, and lay his all at her feet. Time has developed that the husband in question was pretty deep into the future at that period. This picture

of the Ideal was carried so long in Martha's heart, that it became a constant thought with her, and eventually it was confided to the admiring gaze of my sisters. Of course she found plenty of sympathy with them. I suppose Martha must have taken a great deal of comfort in dreaming of the Ideal, and wondering when he would come, and under what circumstances he would appear.

Martha had selected a model for her Ideal. The Ideal was to have black hair and eyes. The Ideal was to have a dark complexion. The Ideal was to be faultless in dress and manners. I remember one thing particular about the Ideal. He was not to smoke. I never heard Martha say so exactly, but I once heard her say that no gentleman would smoke in the presence of a lady, even on the street, and this implied as much. The Ideal was a gentleman, of course. The use of tobacco, Martha said, was nasty and vulgar. The Ideal was certainly not vulgar.

Martha went on cherishing her Ideal, and eighteen years after my acquaintance with her began, she married. A greater part of that time the two families were separated, and I rarely saw Martha. Since her marriage I have seen her less than formerly. It was a year after that event that I first saw her husband. He is a mason, sober, industrious, and frugal; a very good man, indeed. They have been married three years or more.

This afternoon I was looking aimlessly from my window, when I saw Martha's husband coming

across the street. I was looking at him carelessly when the far-away past suddenly flashed before me.

‘ This was not Martha’s husband alone, coming toward me ; it was the Ideal as well. Here was a fulfilled dream, a hope come to fruition. I looked at him closely.

The Ideal, clothed with real flesh and blood, is a man about forty-five years old. In height he is five feet seven or eight. He weighs about two hundred and ten pounds. He has got a round face, and wears short side whiskers (round-faced men should always wear side whiskers). His hair is sandy, thick, and curls outward where it curls at all. He wears a soft hat, and there are marks of mortar on it. On his legs are a pair of brown overalls, the ends of which are stuck in his boots. I noticed, as he passes the window, that the Ideal runs over his boots at the heel. A thick, heavy coat, with the original color burned out of the shoulder by the sun, is on the Ideal’s back. About the Ideal’s neck, loosely wound, and with the knot located in an unpleasantly suggestive manner under his left ear, is a red and green and yellow comforter. The Ideal carries a whitewash brush in one hand, and the other hand is housed in his coat pocket. In the Ideal’s mouth is a short-stemmed clay pipe.

I cannot help but wish that I had not seen this ; or, having seen it, that I might believe it was got for the formation of soap bubbles, but a delicate

column of smoke curls upward from it, and carries the desired illusion skyward.

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#### No. 13.—SPECULATIONS ON A CUSTOM.

MUCH is said of leap year, the gist of which appears to reflect on the gentler sex. The rare privilege is accorded to them to do just as the men do, and I trust they are sufficiently grateful for the same, although I cannot say that I ever knew of a woman availing herself of the same. Still, it must be a comfort to them to know that for a whole year they are not obliged to wait for the man, but can pitch in for themselves. It is harder to wait than to do. Action brings relief to the pressure on brain and head, but waiting has no relief. This is, I suspect, the reason a woman is more patient than a man. I am led, in the consideration of this aspect of the case, to realize how hard is the lot of the female of our specie.

At church, for instance, she is not sure of an escort home unless provided for beforehand. And if an offer comes, it is more than likely it will be from one she cares nothing about. A man has his choice in these matters. A woman is subject to the choice of another, or compelled to go without. I am afraid man don't fully comprehend his blessings.

On the other hand, there is a good deal of wear and tear the woman escapes, and before she concludes to take advantage of leap year she should consider the ground fully. To take the man's place and do the courting, she is obliged to do many things. She must be indifferent to the weather. The true lover goes at all times.

She has got to take her stand in a line of not very particular young men before the church door every Sunday evening, and risk a refusal for an escort from the one she admires, and submit to the raillery of the gang if the refusal comes. There is no avoiding this. If she goes a piece away from the church and the glare of light to wait for her object, she is either certain, in the dark, to miss him, or to find that he has been gobbled up by some less sensitive rival.

She has got to have legs like those of an antelope, to enable her to climb over people in the pursuit of her prey.

She has either got to have an umbrella of her own, or know where she can borrow one without the loss of any time.

She has got to have the money to buy, and the judgment to select, candy, fruit, and nuts.

She has got to have a constitution to stand a lunch of pickles and cake after midnight, three or more times a week.

She has got to do most of the kissing and about all the talking, — that is, the talk that bears most directly on the subject.

She has got to hold him from three to five hours at a stretch, even if he should weigh half a ton.

She has got to give him two thirds of the umbrella.

She has got to carry his basket to the picnic, and fight the wasps away from him.

She has got to wade into the lake after pond lilies.

She has got to take the outside of the walk, and bully everybody, from the usher in the opera-house to the waiter in the ice-cream saloon.

These brief outlines convey but a sample of what she has got to do to "be a man" in love. If she is really going to attempt it, she can have all the particulars by addressing me.

Please enclose a stamp.

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#### THE MIGGSES' THANKSGIVING.

MR. MIGGS is a painter. It is not the business Mr. Miggs's father designed him to follow, but under that peculiar combination of influences which serves to so form the circumstances of the unfortunate in this world's goods as to drift them that way, Mr. Miggs became a painter. There is a fatality about this that no man can any more explain than the victim himself can resist. When a man commences to run down at the heel, as the

saying is, it is safe to predict that he will become a painter. We do not mean, by this, that the paint-pot is a depot for the housing alone of the shifting ventures in the business world. We are of the belief that, as a trade, it requires careful study, intelligence, and application, and that to be a good painter is just as much a task and an honor as to be a good carpenter. But people unfortunate in their plans eventually become painters. Mr. Miggs was apprenticed to a hatter, but gave up when midway in the trade, and resolved to become a carriage-trimmer, as being a much more genteel as well as easier mode of earning a living. The attractions of the business were, at a later period, entirely eclipsed by the glittering generalities of fish peddling, and Mr. Miggs speedily lost himself in the voluptuous surroundings of a fish market. It was easy enough, after this, to approach painting, and before Mr. Miggs himself hardly realized it he was a painter, with a pair of overalls of his own, and a glaze cap, which latter is generally admitted to be of incalculable advantage in painting. Four weeks of patient study, and Mr. Miggs was smearing barns, fences, and unpretentious houses on his own account. More than that, he had aspirations, including painting the lily and gilding refined gold, and was given to devoting whole hours to studying public buildings, or to silence so impenetrable as to be oppressively significant. Mr. Miggs's friends soon got the impression that he

was on the verge of doing an immense business, and would not have been surprised to have heard any day that he had an order for touching up the universe in three colors. Pretty soon Mr. Miggs went back to the fish market, in order to occupy his time while leading citizens, contemplating improvements in their residences, were making up their minds. And so between the fish-horn and the paint-brush, Mr. Miggs and his overalls and glaze cap went through the years, and an atmosphere of decided odors impartially contributed by fish and paint.

And now Thanksgiving day, 1877, has approached, and Mr. Miggs, with his heart full of patriotism, because he can look at the day in no other light than that of patriotic glow, sets to work to appropriately celebrate the occasion. From painting to fish vending, Mr. Miggs has succeeded in accumulating, in the past ten years, three living children, together with a limited amount of furniture, and an unlimited area of prospects. To observe a Thanksgiving without a turkey could not be thought of. There are people who work through the day on roast pork or chicken, but it is an incongruous spectacle to a broad and comprehensive mind with national tendencies. Mr. Miggs determined, of course, to have a turkey. As this religious bird does not grow on every bush, the getting of it, in the circumstances which a long stress of idleness had woven about Mr. Miggs, was a matter of some

difficulty; in fact, to an uninitiated intellect it would seem an utter impossibility.

To Mr. Miggs it came as a matter of course. Years of battling with fate in the persons of many and indignant provision dealers had materially sharpened his wits to a degree that was almost preternatural. There is a way provided for this class of people to make progress in this life. With every emergency comes the strength to climb over it. Mr. Miggs not only climbed over, but invariably struck squarely and safely on his feet on the other side. An unfeeling populace were inclined to believe that Mr. Miggs was shiftless, although admitting that he did not belong to that branch of the shiftless who were lucky in fishing, hunting, and raffling. Mr. Miggs never went fishing, never won anything at a raffle, and only once went hunting, when the premature discharge of a gun forever destroyed his interest in this exhilarating sport, and the contour of his nose, giving that feature an uncomfortable-looking twist.

The afternoon before Thanksgiving, Mr. Miggs was on the street with a red tippet swathing his neck, a battered and buttonless gray coat covering his body, and a pair of dyed-brown pants concealing his legs from the idle curiosity of the world. On his feet were a pair of brand new rubbers, whose shiny surface was pleasantly conspicuous. Mr. Miggs walked up and down the street, pausing to look at the turkeys displayed by the provision dealers, and to cast still more

About one o'clock Mr. Miggs apppeared, and seemed somewhat surprised to learn that dinner was not ready, although there was no precedent for believing that it would be. But as he had come, Mrs. Miggs took advantage of it to enlighten him on the fact that her life was that of a slave, that she never had been and never could be like other women, that it was toil from sunrise to sunset, and never to see anything accomplished, not to have anything to wear, nor to go anywhere like other people ; and she never got any thanks, and she might work till she dropped dead without a hand being lifted to help her. This caused Mr. Miggs to start up as if the harangue had been entirely new to him, and to inquire in the spirit of the day what in the jumblety jam was the matter, that he could n't step foot into that house without being grumbled at and groaned at till he was sicker'n'pizen of living. Whereupon Mrs. Miggs said she did n't want her head snapped off; it was bad enough to get along with a mess of screaming, meddlesome brats, without this. The reference to the children proved a timely safety-valve to Mr. Miggs's sorely tried patience, and he at once walked in among them, carrying consternation and dismay into the inmost recesses of their turbulent natures.

And thus matters progressed until the dinner came on to the table, which it did at that hour when the reason of the waiting ones begins to totter, as is the custom in all families on Thanks-

giving day. Mrs. Miggs planked the turkey down in the centre of the table, and looking around on the children, who had already scrambled into place, and were making that snuffing noise peculiar to uninformed children when eagerly expectant, she exclaimed, —

“ *There!* Now stuff yourself to death, if you want to.”

And with this maternal injunction, in addition to an injunction from the paternal side not to make hogs of themselves, the Thanksgiving dinner got under way. Whatever of gratitude there might have been in Mr. Miggs’s heart, it remained sequestered there. His face showed no symptoms of it. There was a certain degree of pride in having secured such a turkey in the face of so many circumstances discouraging to such an investment, but that was natural enough, and Mr. Miggs would have been much less than human had he not experienced it.

In such spaces of time as were not devoted to indignantly swooping down on the boys, and rescuing the celery from their piratical incursions, or passionately calling upon heaven (his only reference in that direction) to just make a note of the extraordinary hollowness of their anatomy, he would proudly observe, referring to the turkey, “ That’s a buster, an’ no mistake,” “ I guess some folks can have turkey as well as some other folks,” “ I’ll bet there ain’t one man in fifty who could pick out a turkey like that,” and other

observations of a like comforting and instructive nature.

After dinner Mr. Miggs put on his tippet, and went off to see the member of the legislature from Danbury, who, it was understood, desired to confer with him in regard to frescoing the Capitol, and Mrs. Miggs sat down with a book entitled "True Love," leaving the table standing. The three boys adjourned into the back shed, where the oldest two, failing to dispossess the youngest of the wish-bone by the transfer of a piece of green glass, immediately fell upon him with a view to accomplishing their purpose by violence, in which process a shelf containing a variety of articles was brought down with its contents, and in turn brought out the half-crazed mother, who pulled her progeny from under the wreck by such portions of their persons as appeared to view, and having cuffed them impartially on both sides of the head, sat them on chairs as far apart as the size of the room would admit. And there they remained in misery's highest estate, nursing their wounded persons and feelings, and scowling gloomily upon their mother whenever her turned back permitted.

When night closed in, the full significance of the glad festival was summed up by Mrs. Miggs in one sentence,—

"Thank heaven, this day is over with!"

## YOUNG MR. BOBBS.

THERE is a marvellous variety in human nature. We are not all alike, and it is just as well, perhaps, that we are not. Some people are endowed with a propensity for what they call fun, that sometimes overbalances and controls every other attribute. Fun, as a general thing, is the suffering of one man enjoyed by another. No fun of this kind can be produced without cost, and the greater the cost the greater the fun. The more thoroughly a man enjoys fun, the more active, it will be found, is that portion of his mind devoted to evolving it. Such a man will bring to his object a keenness of perception, a profundity of cogitation, and a fertility of resource, that, if devoted to some legitimate result, would hasten the millennium amazingly. Young Mr. Bobbs, clerk for Merrills, the grocer, is one of this kind. The economy of nature finds its best exponent in young Bobbs. His face is of that expression which invites confidence, being colorless, while his ready manner, and anxiety to be agreeable, make him a charming person to deal with, and one who would quickly and most favorably impress a stranger. Young Bobbs is popular with elderly people and ladies, because of his cheerful readiness to oblige them, but to those of his own sex and age he is an object of considerable distrust.

The immovable expression of his quiet and subdued face would make his fortune on the stage; off the stage, we are inclined to believe, it will prove his death.

It was in the middle of the afternoon, in the middle of the week. A dull day in the grocery. Mr. Merrills was out in the country buying produce. Young Bobbs was alone in the store, and, having nothing better to do, was eating crackers and sugar, in the proportion of four ounces of sugar to one ounce of cracker, as is customary with grocery clerks. While thus engaged, a man came in. He was an ordinary-looking party, but he was a stranger, and young Bobbs put down a well-loaded cracker to attend to him.

The stranger did not want to trade. He was the owner of a valuable new paint for roofs. He called to see if he could get a contract to apply it to this building. Young Bobbs's sympathy was aroused. He inquired into the merits of the paint, and soon learned it stood unparalleled in excellence. Young Bobbs was delighted. He had no doubt that the stranger would be eminently successful in prosecuting his business in Danbury. The various roofs were fairly yelling out for paint. He was sorry that the owner of this building was not at home, but he was certain that he would have it painted the moment he got back.

Young Bobbs was looking out of the window as he said this, and his eyes caught the large and

fair proportions of the Wooster House. The glance that rested upon it brightened.

"Come to think," he suddenly said, "there's the hotel. I have no doubt father would have the roof painted. I know there has been considerable trouble from its leaking."

"Oh, that's your father's, is it?" said the man with the paint, and his eyes also brightened. "Well, I've no doubt my stuff will fix it. If it don't, you know, I don't ask any pay."

"Certainly."

"Where is your father?"

"He's gone away to-day, but will be back to-morrow," explained young Bobbs, while his face beamed with ineffable purity. "What would it cost to paint the roof?"

The man said he could n't tell until he knew its dimensions. He supposed he could go over and measure it now. Young Bobbs said he could see no objection to that, so the man went. Pretty soon he came back, and told young Bobbs that, owing to the numerous angles, he could n't get the number of square feet to any degree of nicety. Was there a surveyor in town? There was, and young Bobbs kindly gave him the address. Then the owner of the extraordinary paint hunted up the surveyor, and they both proceeded to the roof and got the exact measure. The stranger paid the surveyor three dollars for the job, and reported back to young Bobbs the full and exact figures, which that young gentleman took down

in a little book with due solemnity, thereby making a most favorable impression upon the paint party.

At this juncture it occurred to young Bobbs to indicate a substantial residence in sight of the store door as the place of abode of his parents. There was a trouble with its roof, and it was only the day before that young Bobbs had heard his father say that that roof must have a coat of paint if it was to be saved at all. The stranger said if there was no objection he would go right over and measure it. Young Bobbs thought it was an admirable idea. So he went. He was in excellent spirits. He was having the best of luck, and was not sure but that he had struck a complete bonanza. He found the doors of the house locked, so, after an unsuccessful search over the premises, he went across the way to a livery stable and borrowed a ladder. By a great effort he got it to the house and up the roof, and ascended thereto. It was a gable roof, and not an easy one to go around on with a tape line. Once he came within an ace of going off and dashing upon the hard ground below, but he saved himself by a sharp wrench of the body, which nearly dislocated his spine.

The wife of the old gentleman who owned the property was taking a nap on the lounge inside, when the noise made by the ladder awakened her. She looked about the rooms for the cause of the disturbance, but not finding it, went outside, when

she saw the ladder and the pair of strange legs disappearing on the roof.

Puzzled by this spectacle, she went farther into the yard to get a glimpse of the roof, and then observed the owner of the marvellous paint busily engaged with his tape line. At the same time her husband came upon the scene.

“What’s that man doing up there?” he asked.

That was what she wanted explained.

“Hello, there!” he shouted.

The painter looked down, and seeing what he believed to be the owner of the place, he smiled, and said,—

“Hello! I could n’t find any one at home, so I took the liberty of borrowing a ladder to get up here. I have had a talk about it with your son.”

The painter here smiled pleasantly.

“My son!” exclaimed the old gentleman, starting from the paint man to his wife, and then back to the paint man again.

“Yes, your boy in the grocery over there,” said the painter, still smiling, and indicating Merrills’s place with his finger.

“I ain’t got any boy in the grocery over there,” protested the old gentleman, very much perplexed.

The paint man cut down his smile one half, as he observed, “Then you ain’t the proprietor of this house?”

“Yes, I am.”

“How’s this?” demanded the man on the roof, while the light, airy look went out of his face.

and left it of a deathly and most disagreeable color. "The young man over at the grocery said his father lived here, and that the roof wanted painting, and I am the agent of a new paint for roofs, and so I came over here, at his suggestion, to take the measure of the roof, so as to give the figures."

As the paint man said this, he looked at the ladder, and mechanically took in its might and size.

The owner of the house looked at his wife.

"It's young Bobbs, over at the grocery; but it can't be *him*," she said.

Her husband turned to the paint man.

"That young man over there is not my son."

"Don't his father own the hotel?" gasped the owner of the extraordinary paint.

"Certainly not. He ain't got any father; he's been dead ten years."

What the introducer of a new and valuable roof paint thought, as he strained his tendons in lug-  
ging that ladder back home, was awful; what he said was simply appalling. It is more than likely that had he not been a stranger, with the timidity inseparable from that relationship, young Bobbs would have been ground into an indistinguishable pulp.

## RAILWAY STATION SIGHTS.

THE position which a plug hat occupies in a railway station late at night is no sinecure. Not by any means. A January midnight in the winter of 1877 found a plug hat thus situated, in the station at Milwaukee. The owner of this hat was a little man in rusty black clothes, just as rusty as the hat itself. He was short in legs, short in body, and short in neck; but he had long hair, and a long nose, and a long chin. His hair was a pepper and salt, straight, thick, and undressed. It was a short plug hat, with a rather rakish brim of some width. It was almost one o'clock. Some twenty people were waiting for the train, in that peculiarly aimless way in which people wait for a train late in the night. There were men cramped upon the seats, and trying in their sleep to do what they never could succeed in doing if awake, to keep comfortable in them. There was a man who had a husky voice which found no expression, but I knew by his clothes, and the hairy appearance of his neck, that his voice was husky; he had a big bundle on the seat beside him, and an humble valise between his legs. He looked straight ahead, and neither turned his eyes to the right nor to the left. There was a youth with long, uncombed hair, and a timid, expressionless face, and a valise. He did not sit

down, but moved around staring at the time-tables and advertisements. In a corner with a lantern between them were three tobacco chewers in coarse clothes, who were *attachées* of the railway, and who were talking in whispers about something of the most trivial nature, but which possessed a deep and natural significance to three passengers who were straining their ears to catch every word, as is common with men when they have got nothing of their own to interest them. Every few minutes some one would come in, and by so doing attract the liveliest attention of every one awake, and would then go out again. At regular periods a man would come in, — a man smelling of oil, — set down a lantern, draw off a pair of gloves, deliberately look about the room, put on his gloves again, take up his lantern, and disappear. At about the same interval a tall, slim young man in a straight, long, black overcoat buttoned up to his neck, with a light growth of side whiskers on his face, a straight, emotional mouth, and calculating eyes, — a man about twenty-eight years old, but with a face that will look no different when he is sixty-four, — would appear, stalk deliberately around the room, and then disappear, his antics making one nervous by their muffled precision. Then a short, thick-set man in a short-tailed coat came in, went through a side door, and presently a glass slide, over which were the words "Ticket Office," flew up, and the well-kept face of the short, thick-set man appeared

at the opening, and looked over the assembled passengers very much as a well-to-do farmer would look over a flock of his sheep.

All this time the plug hat was at work. The owner of the plug, not contemplating taking a sleeper on the coming train, had time by the forelock, and was doing his level best to keep hold. Being a little man, he got out as far as possible on the edge of the seat, and being a man of dignified proclivities, he instinctively crossed his legs. Thus laying back, he sought sleep. The part which the plug hat took in the performance was most creditable. It was perched across his forehead, with a view, I think, to shut out the glare of the gaslight from his eyes. A more uneasy plug hat never went travelling with a well-disposed man. No sooner would he get it located just right, and proceed to close his eyes, when it would instantly tilt over to one side, calling forth the most surprising activity on his part to save it from going to the floor. He never lost his faith, or his courage, or his hope. After every failure he would patiently replace it, close his eyes, and immediately dart after it again. And thus he rested and refreshed himself.

Some people are not fit to travel by themselves. I think the time will come when railway stations will be placarded to the effect that "No nervous person shall be allowed to pass over this road except when properly checked as luggage, unless accompanied by some competent person as keep-

er." This feeling of not knowing which is your train, and, when discovered, not knowing when it is to start, is the refinement of distress, I will admit,—especially to helpless outsiders. But people permit them to grow upon them. They ask questions before the questions are ready, and thus they come in such a shape as not to be understood by the party inquired of. And they have so many queries to propound that they cannot possibly keep track of the answers, even if the answers should be correct. Consequently there is confusion, and distress, and distemper, and dyspepsia, and other consequences still more disastrous. Every train hauled into the station at Cleveland near meal-hour stops there twenty minutes for refreshment. Every man who travels craves refreshment. Eating is an excellent way to pass the time, and the cars are very much like the Sabbath in this respect. I do not think the human stomach is able to distinguish a train of cars from Sunday.

On the particular evening of which I write, a train from the East drew into the Cleveland station. On the front platform of the first passenger car stood a man with a monstrous valise grasped in his right hand, while the left hand clutched the rail. There was a look of anxiety blended with expectation in his face. Just before the train stopped he jumped down, and hurried across to the refreshment-room and disappeared in the door. The next instant I saw through the window that he was ranged in front of the counter, plying his

eyes across the spread, and fumbling in his pockets. Other passengers leisurely got down from the cars, went into the dining-room, and sat down to a comfortable supper. Some three minutes passed when the locomotive bell smote the air with its dreadful sound. The nervous passenger with the monstrous valise appeared at the door with a promptness that unpleasantly suggested he was attached to the bell, and was controlled by its action. One glance showed him that the train was moving. With a look of horror overspreading that part of his countenance not occupied by a generous bite of ham sandwich, he flew across the intervening space at a speed that was simply marvellous, the valise making time on his legs at every leap. Reaching the car platform he clutched the rail with the hand containing the unfinished sandwich, and clambered upon his knees on the platform, and darted into the car, leaving that part of the rail which he had grasped neatly incrusted with a mixture of bread, ham, butter, and mustard. He settled down into the seat with a shiver of horror, somewhat modified by a sigh of relief, and hugged the valise into his lap. Then the train stopped, the locomotive moved away, the passengers finished their supper, came outside and lighted their cigars, and sauntered up and down the platform, while the man of the sandwich sat in the car and looked out of the window upon those people, and the railroad officials, and the general scenery, with feelings too deep and intense to permit of any adequate expression.

## THE BOOK FIEND AT HOME.

IT was in the kitchen on the second floor of a Danbury house. The occupants of the room itself indicated that it was not an abode of wealth.

The husband and father was a mechanic two months out of work, with no immediate prospects of a resumption at his trade. He was a light-faced man with rounded shoulders, thin, straight brown hair, and light blue eyes, with a careworn expression, not entirely hidden by the look of expectation which now filled them. The woman, his wife, had black hair, a pale, thin face, and preternaturally large black eyes,—handsome eyes, but very tired looking. They were sitting in this room because of its fire, as the night was damp, raw, and chilly. On the table between them were a pile of circulars of an advertising nature, which the two children were admiring because of their large type and illustrations. The man ran his hands through his very thin hair on his head for the twentieth time, and said,—

“Yes, sir, every book I sell fetches me a dollar. If I only sell five a day, that will be five dollars. Of course, there can be no doubt of selling five.”

Of course not. His mind contemplated a day's round among his townspeople. He saw that he could in that time visit at least forty families, and *one of every eight* taking a book—a book so

generally and cordially recommended — was not an exaggerative freak of the imagination. On the contrary — looking again over the formidable array of recommends — this was a strikingly mild computation. There was a twinge of regret that he had not taken the project in hand long ago.

“But even three books,” said his wife, hopefully, “would pay well. Or two books. Two dollars a day is a good sum.”

The tired eyes looked around the scantily furnished room, over the threadbare clothes on her family, down at her own rusty garments, and then grew rested again as they contemplated the two dollars. It was a very good sum indeed.

Still, he did not so consider it. His eyes again sought the list of recommends, and his mind roved along the route he should take, including forty visits, and he began to think that in fixing on five sales a day he had done an injurious thing. What if there were ten? It was a pretty good leap. But was it unreasonable? If there were fifteen it would be better. It would be a good joke if he was, in his highest flight, getting way below the mark. And it might possibly be so. A smile unconsciously crept into his face as these thoughts filled his mind.

“I ain’t felt so encouraged in months,” he said to his wife. “We have bemoaned our ill-luck, but how do we know but that my being thrown out of work was the best thing that could happen me?”

“I hope so,” said his wife. Poor woman! She had need of encouragement. And it was a good thing to see the tired eyes brighten. It was a long time since they had. He looked into her expectant face, and his own grew brighter under the inspiration. Presently he aroused himself with the remark,—

“Well, I must get abroad early to-morrow morning, as I'll have a long day's work.”

Whereupon his wife prepared the children for bed, and pretty soon the father and mother retired, but hardly to sleep.

At nine o'clock the next morning he was ready to start. There was not as much enthusiasm as on the evening before, but that could not be expected. Daylight is eminently more practical than lamplight. His patient wife had made his old suit look really presentable, and had prepared him a lunch of bread and butter to eat at noon, for he expected to be too busy to come home to dinner. The lunch he carefully stowed away in his pocket, and his canvassing books he put under his arm. He was hopeful, having just stimulated himself by another careful glance at the recommends. Still, the expression of weariness was there, and the faithful woman who stood before him looking into his face saw it more plainly than was good for her. His features showed thinner with the sunlight streaming upon them. She saw in all their lines the effects of a *long sickness* that had taken all the earnings, and

of a brooding and worry that had come from days of unsuccessful search for work. From this her mind went back over the years of their wedded life, and she saw in their record a steady, uncomplaining fight, and a constant, tender love for her. Then she looked quickly into the careworn face again, and by an impulse which she could not control, threw her arms about his neck and sobbed aloud.

"Lizzie!" he cried, dropping the books to fold his arms about her.

She made no reply, but only clung the tighter to him.

With that delicacy of feeling, occasionally found among the poor even, he stroked her hair in silence, waiting patiently for the paroxysm to pass away. He had no need to ask her why she cried. Every sob that convulsed her weak frame was eloquent of a past full of bitter struggling. But it hurt him to hear her, not that he minded the memory, as far as it affected himself, but only as it told of her suffering.

"Oh, John," she murmured in a broken voice, "we are so poor, we are *so* poor. God help us!"

Then she lifted her head, wiped away the tears from her face, and smiled as she did it, to show him that she was herself again.

Thus reassured, he took his books again, and sallied forth. And the pitying husband was left behind, and a book-canvasser appeared instead. Striking off to another part of the town, his malig-

nant presence soon darkened a doorway. The servant appeared in answer to the summons. She looked into his lean face, which, to a prejudiced person, had a somewhat sharkish aspect, and then at the parcel under his arm, and shook her head in a very depressing manner.

"We don't want nothing," she said, and carefully closed the door. Owing to lack of presence of mind on his part, he neglected to put his foot in the way and prevent the door from being closed, until he had had his own say, and thus the first opportunity was lost. He sighed, and went to the next door.

Here he rang the bell twice, but there was no response. The occupants had seen him approach.

Somewhat weakened in faith, he went to the third house. The family received him, thumbed over the specimen book, admired the pictures, and said they were not prepared to subscribe now, but could tell better in the spring. He had received considerable strength and hope from this reception, but he left it behind when he withdrew. He thought of his waiting wife and children, and instinctively wiped something from his eye, which, were he not a book-canvasser, might have done very well for a tear.

At the fourth house a woman came to the door, gave him a hard look, and immediately shut herself in. Not a word had been exchanged. He slowly retired. The next building was a lumber-office. A man with spectacles was bent over some

papers at a desk. He looked up, and hearing the canvasser, detected at a glance his mission, and stared coldly at him. Our friend began, in a faltering voice, —

“ I have called to solicit your — ”

“ That 'll do,” said the lumber-man, in a stern voice, resuming his inspection of the papers on the desk.

The canvasser gave him a look as if he would like to knock him endways, and then withdrew. Outside the building he paused a moment, as if undecided what to do. He was strongly tempted to go home, and give up in despair, but the thought of his poverty checked this impulse. He looked up and down the almost deserted street, on which the sun lay in a glare of heat. Not a ray of hope did he detect in the buildings or in the air. He passed three houses without the courage to call on any of them. Those who saw him pass must have wondered if he was not ill, or deranged. At the fourth house he stopped. A little girl answered his call. She saw the books under his arm, and, taking the cue from his appearance, said, —

“ We don't want anything.” And she, too, closed the door in his face. Smarting under the humiliation of his defeat, he passed several houses without calling, and brought up at a factory. He went through the building to the office, his feet feeling as if full of lead, and his heart scarcely lighter. It was only a picture of the pale-faced,

sobbing woman at home that gave him the strength to step at all. There were several men busy in the long room through which he passed. They saw his mission, and turned up their noses in derision. They worked for their living, and could afford to despise the lank shirk who went about selling books and living on the fat of the land. Their looks were not undetected by the miserable man with the picture of the crying woman in his heart, and he went into the office with an air of humiliation not calculated to command the respect of the three young clerks at work there. He entered, and removed his hat. The three clerks stared at him, but said nothing about his being seated.

"I have called, gentlemen," he commenced, in a voice he strove to make firm, but which trembled in spite of himself, "to see if you would like to subscribe to a new book."

An expression of dislike showed so plainly on their faces, that he stopped short. The three young men enjoyed this very much. They came very near to being the victims themselves, but by showing an uncompromising front they had saved themselves, and overcome a nuisance and a bore. Highly satisfied with their success, they placidly returned to their work, leaving him standing bare-headed, with an uninterrupted view of their backs. For a moment he remained there, confused and sick at heart, not wanting to remain, and still not having the courage to go. But the young men

paid no more attention to him, and, his position becoming unbearable, he replaced his hat and slunk out of the building. With a heavy heart and a tortured mind he went his way, stopping here and there with more or less luck, but no sales. The noon passed without his lunch. He had not the heart to eat it. Had it been three yards of lead pipe, he could not have felt less like bolting it down. There was a lump in his throat by which a cambric needle would have found difficulty in forcing its way. He began to notice that the people whom he passed were eying him with dislike, and giving him the greater share of the walk. It was hard to be poor, it was hard to be so unsuccessful, but it was ten times harder to be an object of derision, scorn, distrust, and contempt. He started for home with an aching heart. It was going back to a full contemplation of his miserable condition, but there were love and sympathy there, with all the distress, and the miserable man stood sorely in need of them.

When he went in his wife heard him, and came into the room where he was. The look of hopeful expectation died out of her pale face in a flash. One glance at him told the whole story more eloquently than words could have done. He laid down his books, shivering as he did so. When he went to turn toward her, the loving arms were about his neck, and the tired head, with the sobbing voice, was pressed upon his shoulder.

“Oh, Lizzie, it was all so dreadful!” he whispered.

She drew her arms tighter about his neck.

“Don’t talk of it, John. You did the best you could, I know, and if you have failed you cannot help it. We have got each other, and the children, John.”

“Yes, Lizzie, but I am not the man I was when I left you this morning. Then I was respected, if I was poor.”

“John!” she cried in an affrighted voice, looking him in the face. “What have you done?”

“Nothing, my dear wife, but to try to get bread. But I have been made to feel that I was a scalawag, a leper, an outcast, a scoundrel, and a thief. I have been shut out of houses, bullied from shops, and shunned in the street.” He quivered in every nerve as he spoke.

“All for my sake and the children’s, dear John,” she spoke up, with her eyes full of tears. “God bless you!”

And in that benediction, so lovingly pronounced, the burden fell from his shoulders.

The next day he gave up the agency, and the following week a man with a soiled shirt-front and a breast-pin took up the work, and in three days had sold sixty volumes and gained two pounds in flesh.

## MR. SILVERNAIL'S TRAGIC FATE.

A RATHER remarkable affair occurred in the western part of this State last week. Mr. Silver-nail was the hero. Mr. Silver-nail hired a horse to take a pleasure-ride. He drove out into the country. He wanted the companionship of the hills. He thirsted to hold converse with the whispering trees. He hungered for the cooling breeze laden with the reviving fragrance of herb and blossom. It was an escape from care for Mr. Silver-nail. He bathed his soul in the delicious ether. His entire being became saturated with the nectar distilled from every swaying leaf of tree and blade of grass. The horse was a spirited animal, the carriage glistened with a new lustre, the harness was silver-plated. There was the blessed consciousness in Mr. Silver-nail's bosom that he was approaching nature with no mean pomp. He drove many miles in a delicious trance of delight. He passed through the shadow of mountains, and into the sunshine of the plains. He feasted his eyes on glistening sheets of water, cosey, homelike farm-houses, and fields of whispering corn.

The road skirted a ledge. Mr. Silver-nail looked up to its summit, and felt a desire stir his bosom to climb up there for a view. It was rarely, indeed, that Mr. Silver-nail afforded the luxury of

a livery team for a drive into the country, and he felt like taking in all that could be obtained. He stopped the horse, and got out of the carriage. He took down the bars to drive the horse into the lot at the foot of the ledge, for safety. The lower bar did not give away easily at one end. Mr. Silvernail worked it from side to side, with a view to starting it. This exercise, with the friction of the rough wood on his hands, caused Mr. Silvernail's blood to warm unpleasantly. The warmth of the blood inflamed the brain, imparting to Mr. Silvernail's mind a feeling of impatience. The more impatient Mr. Silvernail grew, the more it became apparent to him that it was not an accidental catch, but a deliberate design on the part of the rail to resist him. When this plausible conviction took complete possession of his mind, Mr. Silvernail grasped his end of the rail with a strong clutch, and gave it a vigorous jerk.

As a matter of course, it came then. It came all at once, and with an enthusiasm so much beyond Mr. Silvernail's most sanguine expectations, that he was entirely unprepared for it, and went over on his back, and across the loose stones and gravel, with the rail clasped in both arms, before he could recover himself.

The horse started nervously.

“Whoa!” yelled Mr. Silvernail, scrambling to his feet, his face both red with passion and white with fear.

The cry completed the fear of the horse, and it dashed away at once, a seventy-five dollar harness upon its back and a two hundred and fifty dollar carriage in its train.

The horrified Mr. Silvernail put after it. He strained every nerve. He ran as he never ran before, as he ever thought it possible he could run. He could see only the top of the carriage, but across that, in characters of blood it seemed, was marked the price of the establishment.

How he ran! His face was almost purple. On its surface formed little lumps; around them, and even over them, great drops of perspiration coursed and leaped. Down upon the road, upon all the earth, upon his bared head, lay the sunlight in billows of molten gold. In his heart was the chill of a deadly fear. Through his brain ploughed the flame of a frenzied purpose.

How he reached out! How he strained and strove! How madly he fought the cruel air that lay between him and the flying prize!

The water in the glen trickled and gurgled like a merry child. The trembling silver maples whispered softly to each other. The birds sang. The hum of insect and drone of bee mingled with the rustling of the briars and blossoming weeds.

Still he tore on. He threw the gravel of the road on high, and heard not the soft, sweet music all about him. He puffed and clutched the air with murderous grasp, — the air that had him by the throat, and was fighting him back with all its strength.

He saw not the golden-rod smiling brightly in the sun. He noticed not the star-eyed blossom which from New England soil lifts its face heavenward. He heard not the singing of the birds or the whisper of the leaves. He heard nothing but the clatter of the heartless hoofs. He saw nothing but the reeling top of the flying carriage.

And he saw that not long. It passed over a hill and out of sight. He struggled madly up the slope. He reached the summit. Beyond him flew the maddened animal with the shafts of the carriage slapping the ground behind at every leap. The carriage itself lay almost at his feet, an awful wreck of its former self.

Mr. Silvernail stopped dead still just where this terrible sight burst upon him. His face was whitish purple. His eyes were inflamed. His clothing was torn, and where the perspiration had broken through it was splotched with dust. He shook all over. His heart throbbed like the pulsation of gigantic machinery. He looked up to the heavens, and then around upon the earth. If, in that last wild look, his burning brain sought shelter from the fire beating upon it, if, in that half-crazed stare into the heavens above and down upon the earth that lay beneath, his torn, distracted spirit sought an opening for its escape, he found it not.

All of life shut in upon him and crowded him in upon himself.

Then Mr. Silvernail reached around to the pocket on his hip, and placed the hand withdrawn

against his burning, throbbing temple. Instantly there was a sharp report, but no cry, and the drenched, palpitating figure dropped from the valley's perspective.

An hour later, an old farmer, jogging comfortably along with his wife, was startled by her scream, and following hurriedly her horrified glance, saw, looking up to him from the road, a purple face, and in the dust at its side a pool of human blood.

Mr. Silvernail had left the livery-stable keeper to gather up the remnants of the property, and his heirs to fight the livery-stable keeper.

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#### LIFE AT THE TABLE.

A WRITER in one of the magazines advocates a reform in the home circle. He says there are parents who are the life of every company they enter, but at home are dull and silent. If they have not mental stores sufficient for both places, he recommends that they give home the preference. A silent home, he says, is a dull place for young people, from which they will escape if they can; but how much of unconscious but excellent mental training is given in lively, social argument!

The magazine containing this essay fell into the hands of Mr. Barbary, the other morning. Mr.

Barbary keeps a store, and has a family consisting of a wife and two children, equally divided among the sexes. It was a rainy, sloppy, dreary day, and the store was empty of customers. Mr. Barbary sat at his desk, with the open book before him, and his mind pondering over the article. Business cares had pressed heavily upon him in the past year, tending to dull his entertaining faculties by turning every channel of thought into his business. He had been quick at his meals, absorbed in store matters, and filled with gloom of anticipated trouble. As he read and pondered over this article, its truth was forced upon him. He had been wrong in the past. He was not just to himself, and certainly not to his children. These were not pleasant reflections to Mr. Barbary, for he was very proud of his children. They were growing up in a depressing atmosphere. He was making a dull home for them. He looked around the empty store and through the window into the dark, deserted street. It was a gloomy spectacle. He felt its influence weighing upon his spirits, and then came the thought to him that this was but a type of what he was making his home day by day. Mr. Barbary shivered.

"I 'll do different than this," he said, smiting his hands together. "I 'll commence this very day."

As he said it the noon whistles sounded, and he prepared to go to his dinner.

On the way home he conned over in his mind a

suitable subject for a lively, social argument with his wife. There was an abundance of topics suggested, but they were not all suitable for the mental sustenance of his boy and girl. It must be something that could be taken within the calibre of their minds, and something that would improve as well as entertain. Mr. Barbary thought very hard upon this matter. There were the Silver Bill, and the Indian business, and the civil service, and temperance, and ceramics, and a host of other things,—political, social, and scientific,—but nothing that struck him just right. Mr. Barbary grew more and more absorbed, and bent his brain rigidly toward the point in hand, but nothing would come of it. As Mr. Barbary had a note for three hundred and eighteen dollars due at the bank at three o'clock, and had but seventy-eight dollars and ninety-two cents toward it, perhaps the problem as to where the two hundred and forty dollars and eight cents were to come from may have had a tendency to impair the free flow of his thought. However this might be, he approached his home without having selected a proper subject for lively, social argument. Mr. Barbary need not have taken all this trouble in preparation. A subject was in waiting in embryo for him. There was no lack of subjects, as it afterward transpired. As in many other pursuits, that which we have looked for afar off is subsequently discovered to have been right under our hand.

Mr. Barbary entered the house with a strong

determination to inaugurate a reform, although he was not at all certain as to the steps leading up to it. Mrs. Barbary was laying the table as he entered. There was a smile on his face. A smile got up for the occasion, and quite a success in its way. Mrs. Barbary saw the smile on her husband's face. At the same time she detected something else. In fact, it may be said that Mrs. Barbary took in both extremes of his person at once. She was a tired woman, as women are apt to be at this hour. She said,—

“What on earth do you mean, lugging in a bushel of mud into the house? Can't you see the mat, or are you blind?”

Now Mr. Barbary could have seen the mat, and would have seen and used it, had not his mind been so closely engrossed in seeking for a topic for a lively social argument. He was conscious that he had done no wrong; still he felt that he might consistently give up the smile, as it appeared to be of no particular use at the present juncture. So his face straightened as he stepped hastily back on the stoop to cleanse his boots.

“Sakes alive! why don't you shut that door?” screamed Mrs. Barbary.

“What's the use of yelling like that?” he demanded, as he stepped inside and closed the door.

“What's the use of being so stupid, then?” she retorted.

Mr. Barbary made no reply. The smile had

gone entirely from his face. Her eyes snapped. Mr. Barbary looked at her, and silently rubbed his head. He was evidently reaching out for something suitable for a lively, social argument, without being strongly buoyed up with a hope of securing it. The boy and girl were sitting back of the stove looking stolidly at nothing in particular. Their young lives were drifting slowly but surely into an arid waste. Mr. Barbary sighed. If he could only think of something! He fell to thinking of the railroad, and this led his mind on to New York. There, like many another comer, it lost itself in the whirl of sounds and the multiplicity of objects, finally to emerge with great suddenness. Mr. Barbary had struck a subject,—something for a lively, social argument. Floating over the city, diving through here and out of there, Mr. Barbary's mind ran against East River Bridge. His face brightened up at once.

"Matilda!" he exclaimed, addressing his wife.

"Well."

It was a very simple word, but it came from his wife's lips so short and hard, that Mr. Barbary felt as if it were a trip-hammer under which he had mysteriously got himself. His courage sank, but a glance at the blank faces of his children nerved him up for the trial.

"Do you know what I was just thinking of?"

"I know what you wa'n't thinking of, and that's of more consequence," she said. "You wa'n't thinking that there's a scuttle of coal to get."

With a groan, Mr. Barbary seized the scuttle and bolted down to the cellar after the coal. The occupation served, in a measure, to restore his composure, and when he returned he was ready, although in a modified spirit, to take up the topic.

"I was thinking, Matilda — "

"Well, get down to the table, and let's finish dinner," unceremoniously broke in Mrs. Barbary. "I've got a pile of work to do this afternoon."

Mr. Barbary stumbled into his place in a sort of maze, as if the East River Bridge had suddenly risen and hit him on the back of the head. He actually gasped as he dropped into the chair. But Mrs. Barbary did not notice him. She poured the coffee in a spiteful way, and when this was done, she said, —

"Did you order the kindlings?"

"I declare, I forgot all about it."

"Humph! you'd forget your head if it was n't screwed on," commented Mrs. Barbary.

This stung Mr. Barbary. For a moment he laid down the East River Bridge, and faced the emergency.

"Don't you suppose I've got something else to think of besides kindlings?"

"There, lose your temper, why don't you!" retorted the injured companion of his joys and sorrows.

"Well, what's the use of your throwing things in my face?" Mr. Barbary was thinking of his *note*, and he felt goaded unto desperation. "You've

always got something to jaw over. I never saw such a spitfire as you are getting to be." This was a grave reflection to cast, but Mr. Barbary was getting frenzied. He cared no more for the East River Bridge than he did for a one-eyed Hottentot.

"Well, you're polite, I must say," observed Mrs. Barbary, with lofty sarcasm

Mr. Barbary started up from the table, exasperated beyond the bounds of reason.

"A man might as well eat in Tophet, as to eat here," he savagely asserted, as he got into his coat. "I was going to tell you about something, but now I'll be hanged if I do, and the children may drift into idiocy, for all I care!"

And he rushed out of the house, slamming the door with such force as to make the dishes rattle, and leaving Mrs. Barbary appalled by the dark mystery of his closing words.

There is no doubt that Mr. Barbary meant well. His mistake was, we think, in failing to secure in advance the co-operation of his wife.

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#### HOW MR. COVILLE TOOK IN THE PICNIC.

THE Sunday school of the church which the Covilles attend had its picnic Thursday. Mr. Coville did not care to go, and would have refused

his presence on the occasion, had not Mrs. Coville bitterly asserted that she never went anywhere, but had always slaved her life out, and was always opposed when she wanted to take the least enjoyment, as if she was nothing but a common drudge, as she had been all her days, and expected to be as long as she lived, but thanked heaven there was rest in the grave. Then Mr. Coville collapsed, and said he would go. And all during the day before the picnic Mrs. Coville baked and roasted, fumed and perspired, and when night came she had cake, pudding, pie, biscuit, and meats in tempting array for the excursion of the morrow. She went to bed early that night, so as to get up early, and at the first streak of daylight she bounced out of bed, and notified her sleeping husband that it was broad daylight, and if he did not turn out at once they would miss the train. As it was then not five o'clock, and the excursion did not start till ten, the necessity for intemperate haste did not become immediately clear to the half-awakened man, and in a moment he was sound asleep. There were four distinct awakenings before he could be got out of bed, and by that time Mrs. Coville was in a condition, using her own beautiful figure of speech, "to flood the house with tears." When Mr. Coville got dressed, he found that he had just two and a half hours to eat his breakfast, go down town to arrange business for the day, and get several articles for the picnic, which should have been procured the night

before, but which had been pleasantly left to this time.

After breakfast he went to the store. Mr. Coville is so constructed physically, as to easily perspire. This he wished to avoid on this day. He knew by experience that sweaty underclothing is a deplorable sensation, and that a starched shirt-front wilted under the juices of the body is about as desirable an object under one's coat as a fresh eel would be. Calmness was to be his watchword to-day. Danbury will never forget the sultriness of that Thursday. The heat was oppressive. It came down in layers, each succeeding layer being thicker and heavier than its predecessor. Mr. Coville hastened to his store, found more to do than he anticipated (as invariably happens), and by the time he was ready for the errands he was in an advanced state of melting. He was surprised at the number of things to get, and at the progress of time, which always moves faster when one is not looking at it.

By the time he got home he felt the starch in his shirt begin to give, and this created a feeling of uneasiness which was somewhat deepened by the aspect of the two huge baskets which stood in waiting for them.

There was no time for general remarks; so merely observing,—

“Thunder and lightning, Hanner! we a’n’t going to Nicsic!” he picked up the baskets and hastened to the depot, reaching there just in time to get

aboard of the train. The cars were crowded. Mr. Coville could get no seat, and in this particular he had plenty of company. He put a basket under each of two seats, and then taking a strong grip on the ice-water tank (which, singularly enough, contained water of no kind), braced himself for the ride. In this position he was pinned in back of the door by the voluminous skirts of a fleshy lady, and every time the door was opened, which was about twice a minute, he was jammed farther into the corner. Mrs. Coville was, unfortunately, located at the farther end of the car. We say unfortunately, because having much to communicate to Mr. Coville in regard to the location of the baskets, the condition of his shirt, the location of William, who had not been seen since the start, the possibilities of ever getting to the grounds without an accident, the dreadful heat in the air, and much more of equal importance, it necessitated considerable impotent pantomime and extraordinary exertion on her part to convey it to him over such distance.

And it may be doubted if Mr. Coville comprehended enough of this information to have paid for its outlay. What with holding on to the ice-water tank, and dodging the door, and restraining himself from tumbling flat upon the fleshy lady, and staring vindictively at the back of the heads of the openers of the door, Mr. Coville had his mind and muscle fully occupied. To add to the intense interest of the occasion, the perspiration

rolled in continuous drops from his face and down his neck, and he having no unemployed hand by which with a handkerchief to stay the current, the same slipped quietly inside his collar and went crawling down the sensitive surface of his body.

In the mean time William, having provided himself with a bladder attached to a tube, which, when blown up, collapsed with a most dismal sound, was in the baggage-car with the peaches and another boy, where the bladder and the inviting openings to the crates made the hours golden with sunshine to his appreciative soul. This was a much different disposition of his person than his mother imagined, who, having become confident that he had got under the cars in the start, was now firmly convinced that he had been run over by the wheels, and that portions of his mangled body might now be observed along the track by any one taking the trouble to look for them. This was a dreadful frame of mind to go to a picnic in, yet, after all, it was much better than to have no feeling at all, and so Mrs. Coville hugged the appalling delusion with as much tenacity as if it had been Mr. Coville himself, before marriage.

Arriving at the grounds, Mr. Coville found that his anxiety to get there was replaced by a most unaccountable regret that he had got there. The movement of the passengers, to say nothing of the movement of Mrs. Coville's sunshade, which she was vigorously shaking at him over the heads of the people, awakened him to the propriety of

immediately securing his baskets. He made a dive for the same, but owing to the rush, at the same time, of the passengers, he was considerably retarded, and it was with the greatest difficulty that he succeeded in getting hold of his charge. With a basket in each hand, he found himself hemmed in by the masses, who pressed his refreshments against his legs, and came very near to upsetting him entirely several times. Panting, butting, struggling, and squeezing, he finally found himself on the platform outside, but so bruised and wet, and heated and exasperated, that he hardly knew whether he was escorting two baskets or two buzz-saws. Under the guidance of Mrs. Coville, who had been greatly relieved, although very much astonished, by a view of William in a single unbroken piece, Mr. Coville pierced the grounds, and got to a table, where he was permitted to deposit his load.

The worry, bother, and annoyance being over, the full enjoyment of the day began. It was a happy sight. The children romped and laughed and holloed; the older people moved quickly here and there, distributing the food upon the tables, and making arrangements for cooking tea and coffee; lovers paired off, and strolled away in happy oblivion. It was a scene of unalloyed enjoyment; and as Mr. Coville looked about him and sighed for a dry shirt, he thought of his childhood.

Presently he was sent after a pail of water.

Even he admitted that water was a prime necessity in the performance, but was not as clear in regard to where it was to come from, being an entire stranger to the place. But after a long search, complicated by the advice of parties equally ignorant with himself, he hit upon the happy idea of secluding himself for a suitable length of time, and then returning after some one else had done the errand. With this view Mr. Coville looked about, and soon found a little dell in a clump of evergreens, where he was pretty sure to be free from observation. Here he secluded himself and the pail, and removing his hat, coat, and vest, calmly and peacefully waited for the necessary time to elapse.

In the general excitement his absence was not noted, and his plan worked admirably. Other parties, sent out on a similar errand, returned with a supply, and this tended to obliterate from even Mrs. Coville's mind the cause of her husband's absence. Otherwise she might have come to suspect that he had found a well, and was sitting on its bottom with a view to holding it for the exclusive use of his church.

So while the preparations were going actively forward for dinner, he was lying on his back, looking up into the dense mass of green, listening to the soft sound of the swaying branches, and smiling kindly but firmly to himself.

Mrs. Coville was very busy in setting the tables. Occasionally she caught a glimpse of her hopeful

son, who swooped down upon her so frequently with either some new kind of eatable in his fist, or in quest of something of the kind, that his mother began to apprehend that he not only had a tape-worm of his own, but had borrowed a much larger and more active one of some other boy for the occasion.

Mr. Coville was looking up to the overhanging branches of his retreat. There was no smile on his face. The eyes, directed upward, had a strange, startled appearance. He jumped to his feet, rubbed his eyes, then his head, and stared about him in a very hard manner. He snatched up his hat, coat, and vest, and the pail, and started out into the open air. Here he paused a moment, to look around, as if to get the bearings of the place. In reaching the dell he had gone in numerous directions, and was now at a loss to determine the right way back. There was a feeling in the atmosphere as if something of moment had taken place, or was about to be precipitated. Oppressed by a fear that he could scarcely define, he hurried forward. Despite this nameless dread in his heart, he was aware that the cravings of unappeased hunger were strong upon him, and he felt a tinge of reproach for having murmured at the supply of food his faithful wife had prepared. As fast as his size would permit he hurried forward, without thinking to put on the coat and vest. Suddenly he came upon the tables, *but they were bare.* A shooting sensation of pain passed through

his soul, while the pit of his stomach experienced a shock which nearly deprived him of all power of motion. Rallying in a moment, he dashed madly to the front, dropping the pail in his fright, and came out of the grove in sight of the railroad, and at the same time in sight of the loaded train moving slowly away.

Then the dreadful truth flashed upon him with sickening force. The change in the atmosphere, which he had experienced on coming out of the dell, was due to the advance of the day. It was now six o'clock, and he had been asleep all the afternoon.

Yelling with all the strength his breath would permit, he tore down the path. No one heard him. The momentum of the train was increasing. His agony was dreadful. The atmosphere threatened to suffocate him. The perspiration nearly blinded him. Yell after yell he emitted, as he plunged after the excursion. When about to give up in despair, his cry was heard. The train was stopped, and the unhappy man, more than two thirds expired, reached the hind car, and was dragged up into it a pulpy, gasping, shrinking mass of flesh.

What Mrs. Coville thought, and what the passengers thought as they stared at him, was evident enough from the expressions of their faces and their speech; but what Mr. Coville himself thought, as he shrank into a corner of the car, was difficult to determine, although there must have been a great deal of it. He said nothing, but

there was a look of sickening apprehension to his face, giving it a greenish hue, which color remained unchanged during the journey, except when William unexpectedly observed to his mother, in that penetrating whisper adopted by a boy who has something of a confidential and highly disagreeable nature to impart, "*Don't pa look hungry?*" Then the tint visibly deepened.

With a discretion that did her infinite credit, Mrs. Coville made no response.

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#### RAILWAY FEATURES IN THE WEST.

DID you ever notice how rarely it is that a railway employé, always excepting the brakeman, loses his life in an accident? I believe it is not on record that a train-boy was ever injured. When, at the station at Buffalo, a gentleman pointed out a boy with an assuring face as the train-boy on the fatal Ashtabula train, I was not surprised that he showed no evidence of the accident, although he went down in the smoking-car, and was sitting by the stove at the time. When the *débris* struck the ice he smashed out a light of glass, and spiritedly ejected himself from the burning car. And here he was now, taking offensive liberties with the passengers.

A train-boy on an Illinois road found a rather

tough customer in an old gentleman of composed mien, who received all shots as if he was bullet-proof. The boy bombarded him with papers, and pamphlets, and candies, and bound books, and nuts, and fruits of one kind and another. But it was no good. Had the elderly party been lined inside with brass he could not have shown greater indifference. The boy fretted under this treatment, as was plain to be seen. He had passed the cigars some thirty times, and without success, when he said, in a tone of desperation,—

“Try some of these cigars, and if they don’t kill you within a month I’ll give you the money back.”

The man was somewhat amused by that, but he had the boy. He said,—

“If I’m dead how can you give me the money?”

“I’ll give it to your family, then.”

“But I ain’t got no family.”

“Well, I’ll give it to the family next door,” persisted the boy.

“But there ain’t no family living next door,” said the man, with the smile lengthening on his face.

“Oh, there ’ll be one move in when they hear you are dead,” was the quick reply.

The elderly passenger shut up like a borrowed knife.

I think a train-boy on a Minnesota road, in whose company I recently whiled away seven

hours, is the most enterprising boy I have yet met in this country. He had a wonderful variety of things to sell, and, being active on his legs, and there being but two cars to the train, he got around with startling frequency. He had an insinuating way, and a somewhat impaired breath, to say nothing of several front teeth which had evidently gone out of business years ago, and were now enriching the soil for another growth.

At one of the Mississippi towns there got in a passenger who appeared to be disposed to mind his own business, and had that in his presence which might induce thoughtful companions to attend to theirs. He took a seat opposite mine, and cast his eyes down upon his knees. We were in the smoking-car. The train-boy was at his box at the end of the car. The lid to the box was up, and he was head-first in the box, the two back buttons to his coat, the cloth being worn from the metallic bases, looming up above the lid like a pair of all-devouring eyes. He saw the stranger, of course, when he came in and took his seat, and every two or three seconds he would lift his head from the box, peer over the lid at him with a hungering glance, and, smacking his lips anticipatively, would dip down again to arrange his ammunition. I watched the preparation with lively interest, not unmixed with sympathy for the stranger, who was sitting as when he took the seat. The train-boy got his artillery arranged, and deployed off with the light guns. These consisted of a basket of

figs. He approached, confident of his prey. Just then the stranger looked up and saw him coming. Opening his coat, he reached under its folds and drew forth a rather heavy revolver. Laying it on the seat beside him in full view of the enemy, he looked him steadily in the face and said, —

“I don’t want to buy a thing, not a single article, my friend.”

His “friend” gave a quick, sudden gulp, as if swallowing something particularly difficult, and slid by.

The stranger dropped his eyes again upon his knees, and had no occasion to raise them until leaving the train.

The travelling lunk-head in the East has an older and much more fully developed brother in the West. He is generally to be found on slow trains; such, for instance, as consist of freight with a passenger-car attached. You would think he had travelled for the greater part of his life, to hear him talk. He is full of facetious observations on the speed, which he discharges in the presence of the conductor, and which are heartily laughed at by the lunk-head family. He should be taken by the heels and used to drive piles in a quagmire, and would be, had he anything of a head.

You can pretty generally tell when you have skipped outside the conventionalities of life, by the appearance of the railway officials. The uniform is dropped, and the conductor appears like an

angel divested of wings. Yesterday I had for a conductor a man whose dress would, under other circumstances, indicate that he was a well-to-do drinker and a grocery politician.

To-day I have been under the charge of a fine-looking man in a business suit, blue shirt, loose black neckerchief, and a slouch hat. He was a sociable man with the brakemen, and when not going through the car was in animated conversation with them upon the merits of a fighting dog which he was going to purchase, if it took every cent he could rake up. When we went in to dinner at a way station, he preceded us, and sat down to the table without removing his hat, which informality tended to place everybody on easy terms.

Oh, by the way, did you ever have a man come around to your room in the night to borrow a couple of pills? One such man came on that errand last night, and took occasion to mention an incident which occurred in his boyhood. His mother gave him four pills to take, which he did n't want to take, of course, and left him a small plate of plum jam to escort the pills. He got one down after considerable hard work, and the balance he put in the jam to await a more convenient season. Shortly after his father came in, and noticing the preserve, calmly disposed of it. He chewed it some, and after a while swallowed it, but it was supposed that the flavor was not exactly pleasing to him, for he was heard to hollo up the stairs *to his wife*, —

"Mary Jane, you 'll' have to bile that plum sass over again. It 's beginning to work, I think."

An hour or so later he could have sworn to it.

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### TRUE NOBILITY.

IT was conceded by all who heard it, that Miss Woodby's essay was an excellent production, and at the graduation exercises there were a great many listeners,—attentive listeners, too, with the power of discrimination in such matters. Miss Woodby honestly earned the credit. In preparing the essay she had worked conscientiously and hard, and under difficulties that the public could not have appreciated.

Fortunately we are in possession of the facts in this connection, that we now propose to lay before our readers, that they may judge for themselves of the number of thorns which not only lay in Miss Woodby's road, but which beset every path to true excellence.

Miss Woodby having devoted a week to revolving over in her mind the variety of subjects presenting themselves, with a view to the selection of a suitable topic, chose under the head of moral improvement. On a Monday morning she resolved to begin the work that day as soon as she reached home from school. The title selected

was "True Nobility." Having a few minutes to spare at noon, she got out the paper and wrote down the head, with some pretty flourishes beneath it. It was an unpropitious day for the beginning, being washing-day, and the house in the consequent disorder attendant thereon. The washerwoman's child, never at the best a rugged child, was to-day suffering from the excessive heat, and its little body was broken out with blotches, and its little voice piped forth in pitiful protest. The washerwoman herself was more or less influenced by the suffering of her child, and the effect of the heat upon her own body. She was a little woman with a thin face, from which had apparently been wrung every hopeful expectation, as though it had passed through a great moral wringer, and had come out in a condition most complimentary to the thoroughness of the process. It was a waiting face, with the shadow of a cross resting constantly upon it.

The crying of the child was a decided annoyance, especially to one striving to get her mind into an even frame for thought. To Miss Woodby the sounds were most irritating. She said to her mother, —

"What on earth is the matter with that imp to-day?"

Her mother, having her own hands full, vouchsafed no explanation.

"I declare," she ejaculated a moment later, "if I had a brat like that I would choke it."

And she hurried away to school to get out of the sound of the noise, leaving her mother to attend to the dinner dishes.

In the afternoon she brought out her paper, found a cool place at the window for her desk, and began :—

“TRUE NOBILITY.

“There is the nobility of blood and the nobility of life. The former is but an accident of birth ; the latter is the result of development. The former is but for the few ; the latter is for the many. True nobility is a life nobly lived. It comes neither from birth nor from circumstances. It springs alone from the heart. Money cannot purchase it ; education cannot bring it ; talent will not produce it. It is a treasure which every man may possess, and yet its price is above rubies.”

At this juncture Miss Woodby was obliged to take a long pause to rearrange her thoughts, and while thus engaged her little brother appeared at the door. Miss Woodby looked up impatiently.

“Don’t come in here,” she commanded.

“But I want my hat.”

“Well, get it and leave at once !”

“You need n’t be so cross,” he said.

“If you don’t leave at once I’ll make you,” she declared.

He got his hat with all the speed possible, but on leaving had the satisfaction of screaming out, “Mean thing !” and slamming the door with all his might. It was fully fifteen minutes before Miss

Woodby was sufficiently composed to renew her work. Then she wrote:—

“It is a jewel, whose lustre grows brighter with every day of its use. It is a possession that time cannot wear; that misfortune cannot diminish; that no combination of circumstances can rob us of. The hardest battle is the fight against self. The grandest victory is the triumph over self. There can be no true education where self-denial is not accomplished. Self deadens —”

Just here Miss Woodby's mother came to the room, to tell her to put away her clothes that had just been ironed.

“I can't bother about that now,” said Miss Woodby.

“But they are in my way.”

“Gracious! how can I write or do anything if I've got to be jumping up every minute?” demanded the young authoress, in a tone of very proper resentment.

Mrs. Woodby withdrew her tired body, and went back to her work with a sigh.

“I don't see what makes ma act so contrary,” murmured Miss Woodby to herself. “She could have put away those things herself, if she cared to be any way accommodating.” Then she bent her mind again to the task of composition. Before she could get in order to commit matter to the page, tea was announced. After tea her mother asked her to clear the table and wash the dishes, *but she had to think, and could not do this.* She

inquired, with considerable reason, if she was expected to do everything on earth, and get an essay ready too? She went out and sat under a tree until the table was cleared, and then she brought out her manuscript, and continued:—

“Self deadens the better instincts, and makes him who yields thereto a torture to himself and a burden to those about him. True nobility is to care for others, to give up self, to lose your own will in the will of those depending upon you. He who is without self will be patient in trouble, calm in trial, trusting in adversity, temperate in prosperity. His heart is ever open to the cry of the burdened, his hand ever ready to minister to the afflicted. No thought of himself, no care for his own advancement, is ever allowed to stand in the way of others. ‘In honor preferring one another,’ is the motto of his life, the guide to every act.”

At this juncture the baby sister of Miss Woodby climbed upon a chair at the table to see what she was doing. The child was afflicted by the heat; she had no amusement, no company, and she climbed up to see what was going on. The white paper and moving pen interested her; more than that, they absorbed her very soul.

“Oh!” she exclaimed in a paroxysm of excitement.

“What are you doing up here?” explosively cried Miss Woodby. “Get down from that table this instant, and take yourself out of sight.”

The great round eyes filled with tears, and the lip of the girl baby trembled.

Miss Woodby could have cried with vexation.

"What, for pity's sake, can ma be thinking of to let you come here to bother the life out of me? Go away this minute, or I 'll slap you."

The child scrambled down and toddled away to find her mother, crying aloud with the pain of disappointment. The mother, being out on the front stoop to catch a breath of fresh air, heard the cry, and hurried to meet and comfort the child. In her wearied lap she took the baby, and listened to its story, and kissed it back to a quiet broken only by occasional half-suppressed sobs from its quivering lips.

Miss Woodby, being left undisturbed, started her pen.

"No storm can reach him. He stands immovable before every onslaught from the world. True to himself, true to his God, true to every prompting of duty, his inner life is like the mountain lake in the sunshine of a midsummer day; reflecting within its pure, unruffled bosom, the bright heaven above."

This was a very fine passage, and Miss Woodby was nearly an hour perfecting it, including the operation of getting a light, as her mother was not present to do it for her. She was reading this paragraph over for the fourth time, with abounding satisfaction, when her brother, with a neighboring boy, came "trooping" in. He brought in the other boy to show him a book that had been given him. He approached the table with the

enthusiasm peculiar to youth, and with noisy hospitality observed,—

“Bring up a chair, Bill, and look at the pictures.”

“Charles!” exclaimed his sister, almost paralyzed by the audacity of this movement, “don’t you see I’m writing?”

“What of that?” he surlily demanded. “I a’n’t touching you, am I?”

“But you bother me, and I won’t stand it. Now you just take your book away.”

This was very pleasant for “Bill,” who had come in to spend the evening and improve his mind.

“I guess I’ll show Bill this book if I want to,” sputtered Charles.

“You won’t show it here, I can tell you.”

“But we won’t make a bit of noise, will we, Bill?” cried Charles, to the great distress of Bill, who was quite overwhelmed by the reference to himself.

“I tell you I won’t have you here, anyway,” retorted his sister, growing white with passion. “Are you going to leave, or shall I help you?”

There was such an ominous expression to both voice and face, that “Bill” involuntarily shrank to the door, while the angered Charles, none the less impressed with the advisability of departing, threw the book with a slam on the table, requested his sister, with great feeling, to go to blazes, and escaped with his companion. A moment later she was restored to composure by the sublimity of *her* theme. She wrote:—

"True nobility is a life consecrated to the weal of others. There can come no true nobility without this consecration. And that, to be effective, must lean upon a higher power than aught of this earth. God must be in it to make it a power. Without His help it is impossible to overcome self. Set the mark as high as we may, human weakness will prevent its attainment. Only in Him and through Him can we rise to this nobility."

Hereupon, finding that it was getting late, Miss Woodby put up her writing, and retired to bed.

Immediately after eating her breakfast the next morning she hurried to her room and began again. Her mother told her she would want her help in clearing off the breakfast-table, but she felt she could not spare the time, and took advantage of her parent's absence from the table to get away. She wrote:—

"But we ourselves must strive. He will not make this better life for us, but if we are determined to reach it, He will help us. The secret of success is care for little things, the attending conscientiously to the performance of the smallest duties. That duty which comes first, whatever it may be, is the one to be performed. That claim which is first presented upon us is the one to honor."

At this point in the essay the door opened and her brother presented himself. He had not forgotten the episode of the night before. He surlily observed:—

"Ma wants you to comb my hair and tie my bow, so I can get ready for school."

"It ain't time for you to go to school yet, in an hour, and you know it," she impatiently replied.

"Well, don't I want to go out in the street?" he demanded. "You don't s'pose I am going to stay in the house all the time?"

"I don't care where you stay, or what you do. I am not going to leave my work to bother with you, and if you want to go away to play, you can go as you are, or stay indoors till I get ready to attend to you."

"I won't stay in."

"Then let ma comb your hair. I'll comb it with a chair if you don't get out of my sight. You are enough to drive a saint mad."

Whether this encomium to his qualities was all he desired is not known, but he left, and reported to his mother the result of the errand, and pestered her until she dropped her work and made him ready for the street.

"I wish your sister's essay was in the fire," she was driven to say.

Before Miss Woodby could commence again a fellow-pupil called, and the time till school was taken up in conversation upon the graduation toilets.

In the afternoon she got down to work at the sitting-room window.

"Looking afar off to the accomplishment of

some great service, while little helpful things at our hand are left undone, is not the way to seek a true nobility. Every day should be set apart to duty. It should be entered upon with a firm determination to slight nothing, to avail ourselves of everything that will tend to make those about us happier and better. Thus determined, and with an unbroken reliance on Providence, success must come."

A sudden movement in the yard beneath the window attracted her attention. She looked out and beheld her brother and two other boys playing on the grass. A dark frown settled on her face.

"Charles!" she cried, "go away from there with your noise."

"Go away!" he repeated. "What are we doing to you?"

"You disturb me in my writing. Go on the other side of the house."

"But the sun is there."

"I don't care if it is; it won't hurt you."

"Why don't you go somewhere else to write?" he saucily inquired.

"Don't you be impudent to me, young man, or I'll come out there and pull your ears for you. Go away at once, I tell you."

"Come on, boys," he suddenly cried, jumping up, "let's go away from the cross old stick. We don't ask any odds of her."

And they trooped off.

Miss Woodby could have almost cried at the *ungenerous* speech, she was so vexed.

"The selfish imp," she whispered to her wounded heart, referring to her rude brother.

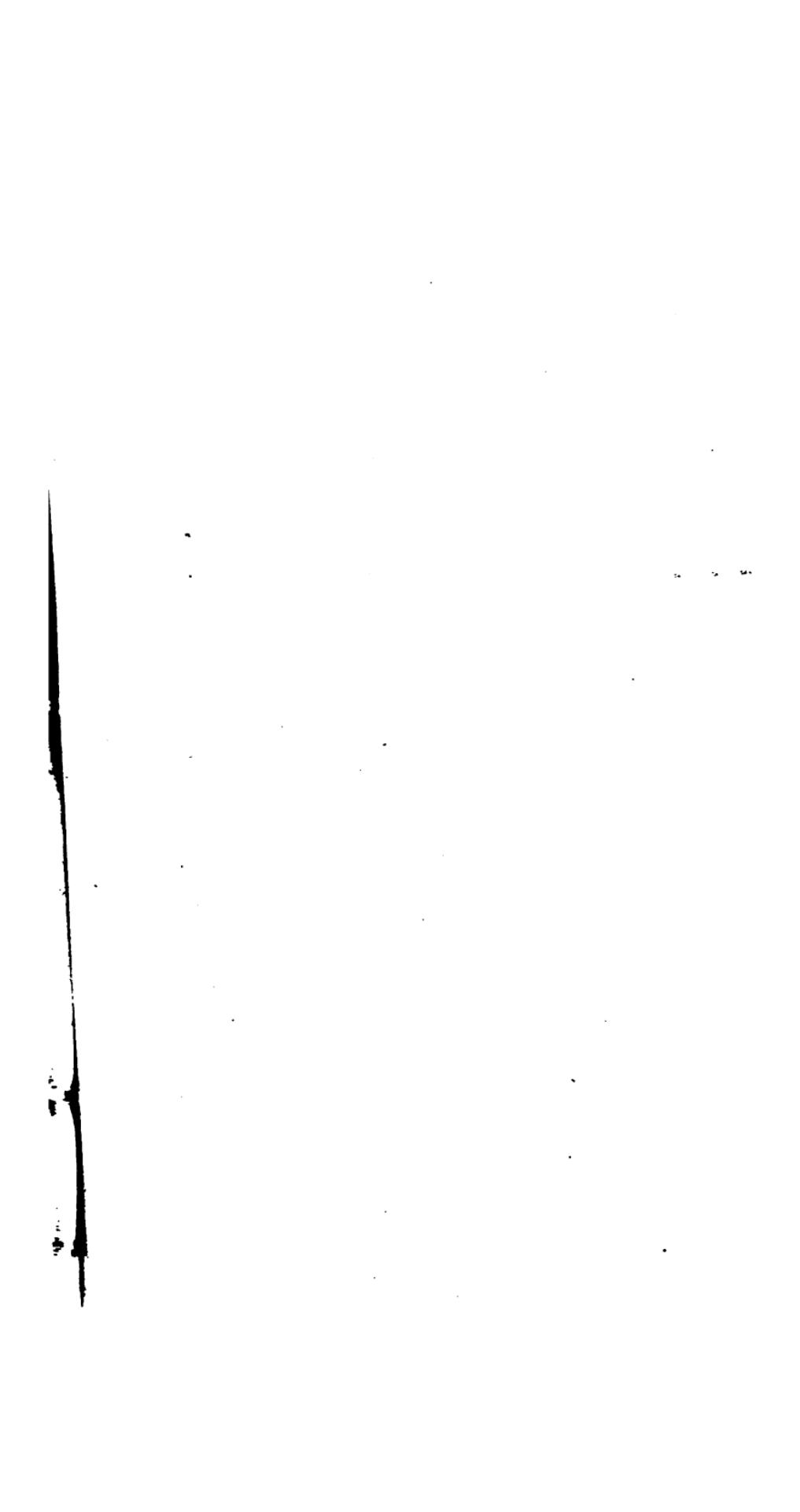
Then she resumed her place at the writing, and continued:—

"Is it not worth the battle? Is not a triumph which shall bring ourselves into subjection to the better impulses of our nature, and bring sunshine into the lives of those with whom we come in contact, something to be proud of and rejoice over? How debasing is the selfish life in comparison to this! How insignificant and unworthy appear the things of the world in contrast to the glory of a pure, unselfish, generous life! How can one content himself to live only for the advancement of self, to grovel in the dust rather than to mount to the clouds? Dear friend, would you be at peace, would you be happy, would you be honored by others, would you be lifted Godward? Then commence to-night seeking the welfare of others rather than yourself, and thus reach TRUE NOBILITY."

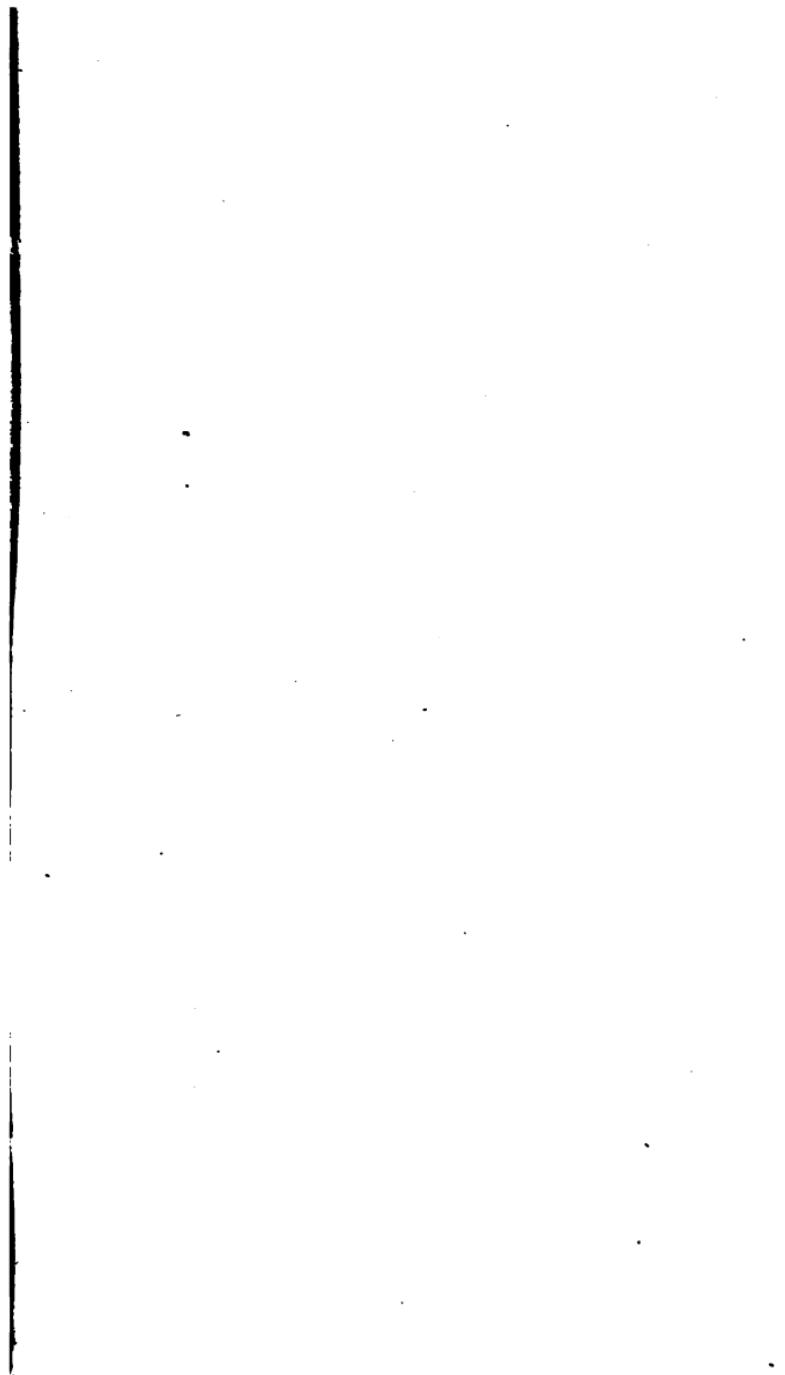
Everybody at the exercises was pleased with this essay, and many a young man of noble impulses looked upon the fair authoress, and wished, in the very depths of his heart, that he might have such a one for a life companion.

Miss Woodby is going into the country with a fellow-pupil next week, to spend the heated term beneath the cool trees and by the side of the running brooks. Her mother will often be cheered amid her family cares by breezy letters, without doubt.











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